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LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

BENEFITS FORGOT

A NOVEL

BY

WOLCOTT BALESTIER

AUTHOR OF
"THE AVERAGE WOMAN"
AND JOINT-AUTHOR WITH RUDYARD KIPLING, OF "THE NAULAHKA"

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I

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BENEFITS FORGOT

CHAPTER I

IT was James Deed's wedding morning, and the town knew it. Deed himself was so full of the knowledge of it, that his face would break from time to time, without his will, into a fond and incommunicable smile of happiness as he rode alone toward Maverick on his horse. His eye measured the crisp and sparkling Colorado morning; and he took the sun upon his large, wholesome, likeable face, with the pleasant feeling that its shining was for him. The agreeable world seemed to have him in thought, and to be minded to do the handsome thing by his wedding-day. And the evil things—the blizzards and sand-storms, and the winds that will be howling at all hours in Colorado, shunned the face of this thrice blessed day.

The cattle pony which Deed was riding had got the news of the kindling morning air, though he lacked word of the wedding; but it was enough that he also knew what it was to be happy. Deed patted his flank affectionately, as they swung into town together; and he was of a mind to give good morrow to the herd that came to the barbed wire fence to observe his happiness with impassive eyes. It was too early to see Margaret; but when he had waked at the ranch-house on his cattle range, where he had spent the past few days, he had found it impossible to remain quietly within doors, and since he must ride it was the nearest thing to seeing her to ride in her direction.

The curtains were still down at the windows of the house where Margaret had been staying with Beatrice Vertner for a month. The Vertners occupied the largest dwelling in Maverick, except the brick house which Snell had built since he had made his strike at Aspen; its architecture was in the journeyman-carpenter Queen Anne manner common to Western towns which have reached their second stage. The pony, accustomed to stopping, swerved in toward the gate, and Deed was obliged to restrain him, unwillingly. There was no one in sight to mind that he should kiss his hand to a certain

curtain in the second story; but he was obliged to content himself with this. He gave the pony the rein, and went swinging into Maverick by way of Mesa Street.

His eye roved anxiously, with another thought, as he galloped along, over the circle of snow-peaks that separated Lone Creek Valley from the world outside, and rested on a cleft in the white hills, through which his youngest son, Philip, should at the moment be making his way from Piñon, on horseback, to be present at the wedding in the afternoon.

Zacatecas Pass, which found its way through this breach in the Sangre de Christo range, led down, at a point thirty miles above Maverick, to the railway, by which Philip should be taking a train within a few hours. A dusty cloud hung above the trail, of which Deed feared he knew the meaning. It seemed probable that it was snowing in the mountains. If it was, Philip would almost certainly fail to arrive in time: it was equally certain that he would be in danger.

There had been a thaw, succeeded by freezing weather, and the crusted snow clung upon the huge mountain shapes with an effect of being moulded on them.

It was charming to follow the modelling of their mighty

bulks under the conforming vesture of white, swelling and dying away in divine suggestions of hidden grace, with the effect of a maiden's raiment. The edged lines by which the hills mounted to the summits lay crumpled on one another, buried in softness. The snow plumped the hollows; and pursued their climbing sides to the secretest fold. The angles were curves, and the curves glistering reaches of satin; for, at every point the sunlight meshed itself in a gleam of white, and the whole field of snow shone with a blinding glitter.

The polished radiance of the hills gave off, in fact, a glare which the eye could not meet with patience, and Deed, withdrawing his glance from the mountains, fixed it on the scattered town into which he was coming. He knew every building in it: he had seen most of them go up. He remembered when the general supply store of Maverick had stood—if a tent may be said to stand—where the post-office now reared its ugly splendour of brick, stone-trimmed and mansard-roofed. In the road over which he was riding there was a familiar spot where an embattled squatter had held his own against the town for a twelvemonth, refusing to move the log cabin which he had built in the centre of

Mesa Street before there was a Mesa Street. Deed had contributed to the building of the Episcopal church, past which he was riding at the moment; and, as he glanced at its roof and front, he was sorry that he had not put aside more profitable business long enough to get himself appointed a member of the committee on its architecture. He tried to excuse himself by remembering that he had insisted on the simple and genuine Gothic interior, carried out in pine, which made it a very tolerable little church within.

He had had nothing to do with the roller skating rink; nor with the Grand Opera House, which depressed the observer by its resemblance to Libby Prison, though it was an achievement of wood, and clapboarded up to the summit of its false front. The ingenuousness of the pretence with which the false front faces down the spectator in the new towns of the West would be almost a thing to disarm criticism if the front were, in itself, more beautiful: certainly if the aspect of the front on the side intended for the audience were less hideous one could hardly like to humiliate it by going around behind and spying out the nakedness of the device. As it is, nothing could be pleasanter.

As Deed's eye ranged over the roofs of the main street

behind the fronts, he smiled at the disproportion between the height of the actual squat buildings, and the height which the fronts alleged for them. His happiness gave an edge to his observation; he saw familiar things as if for the first time. On the treeless plain over which Maverick was dispersed nothing obstructed the vision for miles, and from so slight an elevation as that along which Deed was cantering, one commanded a panoramic view of the entire place. The hotel at the station, the public school, with its high central tower, the post-office, and the railway hospital, were the only structures, besides the church, which lifted themselves above the level of the prevailing one- and two-storied buildings. Except in the main street, the dwelling houses lay isolated from one another in archipelagoes, marking the push of the real estate boom to one and another corner of the young city.

As Deed came into the business centre of the place (distinguished as such by the board sidewalk that went loftily along the thoroughfare on either side the way, and by the blazonries in red, black, and chrome yellow, on the muslin signs tacked upon the fronts of the shops, and the tethered cattle ponies, burros, and Studebaker wagons of the

ranchmen who began to come into town), he was hailed by a loitering group gathered about a telegraph pole in front of the post-office.

"Goin' the wrong way round, ain't you, Mayor?" inquired one of the group.

Deed had served the unexpired term of a Mayor of Maverick who had suffered the inconvenience of being shot in the early days of the town; and the usual military titles refusing to fasten themselves readily to a certain dignity which the town recognized in him, it had compromised upon "Mayor," as being a fortunate combination of the respectful and the jocular.

Deed's answering smile owned the impeachment of the humorous reference; but the etiquette of Western chaff is not to sanction such an understanding with speech. It is, rather, *de rigueur* to meet such references with a heavenly unconsciousness of innocence—and to own them only deep within the understanding eye, which admits both parties to such amenities into the open secret of the no secret.

"Well, yes; for Aspen and some places up Eagle River way I'm going a good ways around, Burke," said Deed

with twinkling eyes, as he checked the pony; "but I'm headed right for the telegraph office, I think, unless I've taken my observations wrong."

He was giving his pony the rein, as some one said, "There was some tell about town here, Mr. Mayor, of your having asked unanimous consent to make another matter a special order of business for to-day." The postmaster, who had served a term in the legislature, was fond of the phrases he had learned at Denver.

"Yes; anything we can do for you, you know.....," darkly intimated the young fellow on whom the town's repute for the possession of the hardest drinker in the county depended. On Sundays Sandy was the sexton of the Episcopal Church; other days he divided between Ira's and certain odd jobs.

"To be sure: that reminds me—there *is* something you can do for me, Sandy. Ira has my orders. Call on him this evening and take the camp."

"Make it a dozen, Mayor," wheedled Sandy.

"Could n't," responded Deed. "I've made it two." He smiled at the group. Sandy guffawed his enjoyment of the prospect. The rest coiled their tongues deep in their

cheeks, shifted the pain of sustaining their bodies from one leg to the other, and gazed at the "Mayor" with a broad smile.

"Denver?" asked some one.

Deed shook his head. "Anheuser & Busch."

"Bottles?"

"Kegs."

He surveyed the grinning group with a smile, as he caught up the reins. The points at which he differed from them were perhaps rather more obvious at the moment than those by which he was allied to the life of the place, and of the West. In spite of eight years spent in the West, broken only by occasional visits to his old home in New York, and, (while Margaret was still in question), by a single visit to Europe, his bearing retained a sort of distinction, which no measure of consent to a civilization that surveys life with its hands in its pockets and its trousers in its boots was likely to vitiate.

In being unaggressive this bearing escaped the condemnation under which all forms of aloofness from the common lot properly lie in the West; and, in being on humorous terms with itself, it rather commended itself than otherwise to a people who must see life as a joke if they would escape

seeing it as a tragedy. It was far from being his manner of distinction that gave Deed his place in the regard of Maverick, and of Lone Creek county, of course; and it was scarcely by it that he prevailed in his practice before the Supreme Court at Denver, or in his fights for mineral claims at Leadville. He counted, as every one does in the West, who counts at all, by pure force.

Deed liked the West as men like what serves their ends, and for something more. There was a kind of obligation of gratitude upon him to like it, for it had been his rescue from lethargy after the death of his wife in New York ten years before. He had had no wish to live when he came West, and his friends were surprised to hear after six months that he was still alive. He was what is called "a very sick man" when he reached Maverick; and, as he was also a very miserable one, the chances that he would presently be borne to the desolate little graveyard on the *mesa* just outside the limits of Maverick were rather better than the chances of his pulling through to find a new strength with his reviving interest in life. In the event he not only "came around," as the neighbours said; but, in laying hold upon the practice of his profession again, discovered a pleasure

in pursuing the application of its principles to new conditions.

He chaffed the West, now, when he met a man who, like himself, had once been a New Yorker or a Bostonian; but this was by way of reminding himself to remember how absurd the whole affair was, after all. The real fact was, that, absorbed in his work, in creating a future for his boys, and finally in accumulating the fortune which he had seen one day, might be his for the use of the needful energy, he had forgotten to philosophize the West, as he had been used to do while he lay staring idly from his sick-bed on a range of mountains which he remembered thinking too big. Consciously, or unconsciously, he had cast in his lot with this huge, crudely prosperous, blundering, untutored land; and if he had still reserves, there was never time left from his mines, his cattle and his law to think of them.

He was putting spurs to his horse, as Snell, the leading merchant of the place, who had just joined the group, inquired suggestively, "The young men will hardly arrive in time for the ceremony, I take it, Mr. Deed?"

"I don't know, Mr. Snell," said Deed, restraining the pony which was chafing to be off again. "I hope to see

Philip. He's dropped his mining experiment up at Piñon, at my suggestion, and he will get through by the two-thirty train, I hope, if he gets over the Pass all right. I don't know whether to hope that he has left Laughing Valley City or not. I'm just on my way to the telegraph office to inquire." He cast a doubtful look toward Zacatecas Pass.

"Looks some like snow, up around the Pass," commented one of those young men of middle age who, in the West, somehow keep the sap of youth jogging lustily in their veins, at an age when it has dried out, or soaked down into the roots of New England men. It is possible that the speculative fancy of man does not engender a new scheme with every moon for nothing. The habit seems to keep the juices alive and fluent; and, at least, it makes an open mind, which is itself, no doubt, the better part of youth.

"It does look like snow," owned Deed, as he glanced anxiously again toward the mountains; and some one ventured to ask him about Jasper. He was detained by business in New York, he said, at which Snell exchanged a significant glance with his neighbour. He hardly expected him for the wedding, he added. It was pretty well known in Maverick that Jasper wasted no approval on his father's second marriage;

and there were persons who saw dubious things beneath the peremptory summons which he had given out a fortnight ago as calling him to New York.

As Deed, to cut short the embarrassment of this line of questioning, definitively caught up the reins and gave the pony a cut with the quirt, the group gathered about him lifted their sombreros, or such rakish or merely slovenly caps as they wore, and swung them about their heads in the burlesque by which Western manners express their condescension to the customs of a superseded civilization. It was not a bow, nor precisely a ceremony of farewell, but a mixed expression of thanks for the "irrigation" to be offered at Ira's in the evening, and of an embarrassed sentiment of congratulation on the event of the day, which did not quite know the smartest way of conveying itself.

When some one inquired "What's the matter with James Deed, Esquire?" and the crowd gave the foreordained answer, with a single voice, they had really done for him all that one sovereign can do for another in the way of expression of good-will: it was frankincense and myrrh, and oil and wine and precious stones offered him on a tray of gold,

if you liked. It was meant for the same thing; and Deed did not like it less. He turned in his saddle, and waved his own wide-brimmed hat to them in acknowledgement, his fine smile on his lips.

The Colorado sunshine was flooding the room in which Margaret awaited his coming, without let from blinds or shades. She stood in the big patch of radiance flung upon a rag carpet past fear of fading, and looked wistfully out of the window. The house stood a little apart, at the head of Mesa Street, the chief thoroughfare of Maverick, near the outskirts of the town; and, in the clear mountain air she could see for a long distance down the road.

Breakfast was over; and Beatrice Vertner had left her after it to attend to some household duties, which weddings apparently do not make less important in their process of dwarfing all other concerns.

A quarrel between father and son, Margaret was saying to herself, as she stood by the window—it had not come to that yet, but Jasper's opposition to his father's second marriage had only been saved from that by the moderation and temperance of her husband who was to be: she felt sure of

that—seemed, at best, a wretched business; but this was, she felt, unbearably sad. In the foolish days when she was saying Deed nay, because she did not yet know herself,—and he was following her from New York to Paris, and from Paris to Geneva, and from Geneva to Naples, patient, decently doubtful of himself, but persistent,—she had seen what it cost him merely to be separated from his sons. Later, she had come to understand how the obligation he had felt to find something within himself to replace the tender care of the mother his boys had lost before they were old enough to know the meaning of such a loss, must have reacted upon, and enriched his feeling for them. She remembered how, seeing that his concern for their welfare was the substance and texture of his life, she had warned him—it was at Naples—that such affection as his played with high stakes; and how his face had darkened almost angrily at her hint of the possibility that sons might disappoint one's faith in them.

Just before their first meeting Deed had bought and stocked for his boys the cattle range from which she hoped he was riding in at this hour, and Jasper was established there in undivided charge until Philip—then in the first year

of one of his foolish boy's experiments in Chili—should be ready to come back and take his share in the management. She recalled well enough how she had rallied their father's unwitting boasts of Jasper's success, how she had assisted with inward amusement at the pretence that he kept his fatherly fondness covert by bantering it with her, and how, when that was his mood, she had seemed to consent to his transparent vainglory in the shrewdness of his clever young men of twenty-four as a natural enthusiasm about a successful venture of his own. But constantly she had the sense of his loving pride in both his boys; and she liked it.

Deed could not have told her, even if his knowledge of it had got out of the region of half-perceptions in which we keep our reluctances about the faults of those we love, that Jasper belonged to the Race of the Magnificent, who have their own way—a happy provision arranging that no one shall find it worth quite what it costs to oppose such ways. When Margaret discovered it for herself, she had only to put it with familiar characteristics of Deed to understand how the partnership papers in the range, which were the origin of the present difficulty, had got themselves signed.

When Deed, in good-humoured recognition of Jasper's

successful management of the range, had offered him a half-share in the profits from it until Philip should be ready to claim the third already belonging in all but form to each of the boys, it was like Jasper to say that it was very good of his father, and that they ought to "put the thing on a business basis." But it was rather more like Deed—whose pride in Jasper's business shrewdness commonly took shape before the young man himself in a habit of ridiculing him indulgently about it—to have laughed at him and consented. And it was not less of a tenor with their usual relation that he should have let Jasper have his way about giving this profit-sharing, for a limited term, the form of a partnership.

About his own way Margaret knew he would have no conceit, while regarding the symmetry of his act in giving Jasper something like the reward his faithfulness and sagacity in the management of the ranch had earned, he would have a certain pride. For Margaret, who, for her own part, had ever frugalities and cautions to be satisfied before she could be about a matter, both understood and admired the recklessness with which Deed was accustomed to do a nice thing thoroughly. To her it was an inevitable touch of character

that he should have glanced over the papers of partnership which Jasper had drawn up, should have signed with a smile for his gratification in doing an entirely gratifying thing; and then should have had the boy to supper with him at the only restaurant in town, where they drank to the success of the range in the champagne left over from the previous night's supper of the Order of the Occidental Star.

Deed had not meant to marry again, then, of course, and the cattle range was then an incident of his fortune, instead of one of the main facts of it, as it presently became.

When he first thought of Margaret he congratulated himself that there was still the ranch, for, at a little past forty, he found himself, through the scoundrelly trick of a man he had trusted, almost as entirely on his own hands as he had been at twenty—with a fortune to be won again, and with life to be begun pretty much afresh. When this trouble came on him he thought of the boys; remembered with satisfaction that they were provided for, whatever came; shrugged his shoulders; took a look at himself in the glass, measured himself thoughtfully against the future, brushed the black lock down over the fringe of grey in front; smiled; went out and had a good dinner, and began again that afternoon. A year later, when

he first offered himself to Margaret, it was pleasant to know that the ranch was now not quite all (some of his mining stocks were doing better); but the third interest, which would still remain to him when Philip should have claimed his share in the range, had not lost its importance to him. And Jasper had done wonderful things with the enterprise since they had pledged each other in the bad wine of the "Delmonico of the West."

It was a little later that there began to be discoverable in Jasper's manner the hints of opposition to his father's second marriage, which had lately come near ending in an estrangement between father and son. The difference between them was, after all, but scantily patched up: and on the head of it Jasper had set out for New York, knowing that he could not be back in time for the wedding, and leaving word that he would write his father regarding another matter which Deed had broached to him just before his departure. The other matter was the re-organization of the arrangement at the ranch to include Philip, who had given over mining, after a twelvemonth in the mountains.

He had gone to Piñon on his return from Chili, with his young man's interest in anything rather than the usual

and appointed thing lying ready to his hand; but he was now willing enough to accept his father's advice of a year before and join Jasper in looking after the ranch, where an assured income awaited him. Deed had wished to see this wandering, impulsive, hot-blooded, unsettled son of his actually established on the range before his marriage to Margaret. Unexpected events at Piñon had prevented this; but when he should come down for the wedding it was arranged that he was not to return, but was to take up his residence at the ranch immediately.

If this provision for Philip's future had not already been made when Margaret first began to be in question, Deed could not have asked her to marry him. He felt, in a degree which it would be difficult to represent, his responsibilities to his boys; and the long habit of making them the first concern of his life must have prevailed with him, whatever his feeling for Margaret, if they had needed anything done for them. But the ranch was a property which, conducted with any skill, must yield them both a handsome revenue, when both should be established on it.

Margaret liked the faithfulness to the future of his sons, which would not suffer him to put even her, or their common

happiness, before it. He was determined to leave nothing at loose ends; and he was even awaiting the formality of Jasper's assent to the new arrangement at the ranch, as if it were an assent which he was free to withhold—as if all property of his boys in the ranch were not derived from his generosity, and as if Jasper's present tenure were not peculiarly by grace of his father's good humour. It was only a form; but Margaret knew that Deed characteristically regarded it as a sacred preliminary to their marriage; and when she saw him riding up to the door, waving a letter in his hand, she knew what letter it must be.

She ran out into the frosty air to meet him. Standing on the porch, under the shadow of the scroll-saw work, which was as much in the Queen Anne manner as anything about the house, she waited for him to tie his horse, cuddling her arms about her waist. The air had an edge. She gathered herself together: there was the cold to keep out; and there was a soft, interior content which she was willing to keep in.

It was hard not to be afraid of some of her feelings lately.

"Watch your horse!" she adjured, with a little nervous shiver. He was trying to tie the pony while he kept his eyes

on her; and the tying was on the way to failure. He had taken the letter into his mouth for greater convenience. They both began to laugh, so that he had to take it out.

"Dearest!" he whispered, as he caught her to him in the porch. But she would not give him his kiss until they were in the hallway.

"It's come!" she said, with a joyous nod toward the letter in his hand, as they went into the sitting-room, which was as discreetly empty as the whole house seemed suddenly to have become in the hush of their happiness.

"Yes," he said, alternately offering and refusing it to her, as he held her away to make certain that she was the same Margaret with whom he had parted the night before for the last time, and who was to give herself to him in a few hours.

She sniffed at the flowers he had slipped into her hand in the hallway; and to make sure she did not cry, laughed at the smile of love on his face, which often oppressed her with the obligation it seemed to lay on her to keep it always there. And then she clapped her hands and laughed again to perceive in herself a kind of young girlish pride in his being handsome and manly and altogether very fine and impressive this morning.

It was true that he was a striking figure as he stood holding her at arm's length ; and not less so when he left her side and went over to the mantel, where he leaned his head upon his hand and watched her for a moment in silence, as he struck at his riding boots with the quirt he had brought in with him. His hair was a bit grey where his large round head had begun to grow bald on either brow ; but this, with his grizzling eyebrows, and the strongly-marked lines about his mouth which, in a younger man, would have seemed merely the outward sign of resolution, were the only tokens by which one would have known him to be more than thirty-five. His hair, like the moustache, which was the only adornment of his face, was worn clipped quite short ; and this gave him, coupled with his rather careful habit of dress, a certain effect of trimness and well-being uncommon in the West. He had the habit of resting his weight firmly upon the ground ; and the dignity and ease of his bearing was not lost in the most impetuous of his habitually rapid movements. His eyes had a tinge of blue in some lights, but it was the indefinable grey in them which gave the look of power and firmness to his face. It is doubtful if these eyes were really more blue in his kindly moments ; but it is not doubtful that

they seemed so. That which distinguished his look and his manner, however, after the force which no one could fail to feel in him, was an effect of unconquerable youthfulness and buoyancy. His eager, mildly searching glance, his manner of unceasing alertness and energy gave one the sense of a man much alive.

He glanced with keen liking about a room which he had known for a long time ; but which, somehow, had never been as interesting a room as it was this morning. He was almost in a mood to forgive the wall-paper, which insulted the remnant of Eastern taste in him ; and, as he turned and stared, with his hands in his pockets, into the fire, not knowing what to say in his happiness, it gave him a warm feeling about the heart to see what a gay time the combustible piñon wood of the mountains was having of it in the little grate. There was even a certain light-heartedness about the "what-not" in the corner, on which the collection of mineral specimens,—part of the religion of Colorado housekeeping, —was reflecting the Colorado sunshine from unexpected facets of ore ; while the iron pyrites winked in the sun at some possible tenderfoot mistaking it for gold.

Beatrice Vertner's taste had contrived to give a home-like

expression to such furniture as there was; but the room was rather bare. The big photograph of Veta Pass, in which a train had stopped to be "taken," hung in frameless, fly-spotted solitude above the tennis racquets and riding crops in one corner. There was a good engraving above the fireplace, framed in unplaned scantling, and a couple of clever oil-paintings, by some of Beatrice's Eastern friends, brightened one corner of the room, which was further lighted up by a brilliant-hued Navajo blanket, hung as a *portière* at one of the doorways. The home-made rag carpet, in its modest propriety of colouring, caused the Western villainy in wall paper to wear a self-conscious smirk. At the side-window there was a burst of colour, where the lower sash pretended, not very seriously, to be stained glass.

"Such a spick-span conscience as I've got this morning, Margaret," he said, coming over to her and taking her hands again, while he looked down into her eyes, which she straightway dropped. "There is n't an unswept corner nor an undusted piece of furniture in it. I've had out all the couches, and had down all the pictures, and gone in for a general house cleaning. The boys are safe and settled, both of them, and in seven hours——"

"Seven-and-a-half," she corrected, smilingly, with the precision which seems never to leave a woman who has once taught school.

"Half is it? To be sure—half past four. But everything must be whole this morning, Margaret, like our happiness. Have you noticed how every one feels responsible, and—interested about this affair? They were all at the windows as I rode up the street; or rather they were behind the curtains—and I had to try to look the disinterested morning caller on my way to pay a sort of duty call. But they saw through me. My foolish joy leaks through my eyes, I suppose. Margaret, dear," he asked, taking her doubtful and feebly reluctant form in his arms—for even on the eve of her wedding, the indomitable Puritan in her must have its shamefaced way with her will—"tell me, does it distress you that I can't conceal it? You are so much better at it. Let me see your eyes. Come, you are not fair. Look up!" And then, as she tremulously took his glance for a moment he put back his big head, and laughed monstrously. "I see: you *were* thinking it: that it is unbecoming that they should be laughing over our

happiness — indecorous — um — unseemly. Oh, Margaret, you are great fun!"

"Am I?" she asked, with a shy smile, keeping her eyes on the button she was twisting on his coat.

"Yes, yes," he cried, through his laughter, as he drew her to the sofa, "you don't know what you miss in not being able to enjoy yourself." He caught her to him, and she hid her head on his broad breast for happiness.

And with his arm about her he opened the letter. "Is n't it fine, dear, to know that Philip is settled down and done for, before we begin with each other, and that we need not fear for him? I should have felt as if I were running away from him otherwise. I like to get this letter from Jasper, just at this time. It's only a form, but it makes everything quite sure. I'm afraid we're too happy," he sighed, as he glanced over the first lines of the letter, and, as he turned the page he looked up in a daze, and could not believe there had ever been such a thing as happiness in the world. He bit his lips, not to cry out.

Margaret watched him in silent fright as he read on. A pallor deepened over his face. It went, and he appeared to regain himself. But the thought—whatever it was—seemed

to clutch him, of a sudden, at the throat, and he buried his face in his hands with a groan.

Margaret's arms, for the first time of their own motion, stole gently about him. And so they sat for a long time, in silence.

Once she said softly, "I'm so sorry, dearest!" Questions she saw, could not help him, and she did not know how to say her sympathy. She understood without words that Jasper had in some way played his father false, and she yearned over the man who, in a few hours, was to be her husband with an awed sense of what such a falsity must mean to him.

The letter shocked her when she read it; but it could not sharpen her pain for him.

Jasper explained that he could not hold himself bound by the understanding under which his father apparently supposed him to have taken a half-share in the profits of the range, and that he must decline to surrender to Philip any share in it. He "stood upon the articles of partnership, giving him the rights of an equal partner, for a term of years." The rest was phrases. He should be very glad to offer his brother employment on the range; should be "most happy to afford him every" . . . . . trusted that "such an arrangement

might be mutually" . . . . . hoped that this "would be accepted in the spirit in which" . . . . . ; was sure that his father must feel that "Business is always business": and, disclaiming any motive of greed or animosity, begged him to believe that he remained his "most affectionate son."

Margaret did not dare look at the stricken man beside her when she had finished this.

"If he had only died!" he moaned.

"Oh, I know, James, I know!" she murmured, with an uncertain caress.

"Do you, dear?" He looked up dully. Something vital seemed to have gone out of him. His haggard look appalled her. She shrank from it with a fluttering glance. "No, no," he said, "you don't know. You should be glad you can't. You must have cared for a child in sickness and health and done things for his sake, and been through all sorts of weather with him, and scolded his badness and loved his lovableness to know."

"Of course, of course!" whispered Margaret mechanically because she could not find the right words, if, in truth, there were any.

"You can guess, dear," he said, "and it's good of you;

but to really know you ought to have watched his growth, with its touching likeness to your own growth; and have seen the little armful of flesh, with the tiny beating heart, that you were once afraid you should stop with a rough clasp, grow to be a man, with a man's comfortable power over the world into which he came so unknowingly——and with a man's awful capacity for right and wrong." He sighed. "Yes, yes," he went on with a note of bitterness, "you must have done what you could to help him to a place in the world"——his voice broke——"and perhaps you ought really to have been both father and mother to him," he added with the ghost of his smile: "his friend, as you stood in the place of his mother; his comrade, as you were in fact his father, to honestly know. Thank Heaven you do n't know, Margaret!"

The patient desolation of his tone touched her inexpressibly. She took his hand in both hers, studying it absently a moment; and one might have thought she meant to raise it to her lips; but, struggling against the tears in her voice, she said, "Ingratitude, though, James—is n't it much of a piece wherever you find it, and—and suffer from it? I can understand that, I think." She paused, biting her lip for

self-control. "Oh, it is cowardly!" she broke out. "Does n't it seem so, dear? Cowardly and brutal!" Her arm slipped about him again, as she searched for these blundering words of helpfulness. She would have given the world to reach and soothe the pang which she seemed to herself to be merely moving about in a helpless circle. The unyielding tradition in which she had been nurtured, and which possessed her less since she had let herself love him, but which still was mistress of her, had never been so irksome to her.

At the moment she longed to recreate herself, for him, the creature of some sunnier land, whose women do not have to wonder how they shall comfort those they love: who have a natural language for affection. But the honesty in her would not suffer her to express more than she could feel instinctively. "Who,—who but a coward," she went on chokingly, "could wrong so unanswerably as ingratitude wrongs——so far past help, so deep beyond protest: so deep, deep down that the mere thought of lifting a voice against it is a misery, a nausea, a degradation!"

He leaped up. "Yes, yes," he cried, with impatient energy. "But one can act—*must* act when the thing's past

talk. Where did I leave my hat, Margaret?" He took her by both shoulders, with a sudden impulse, and looked for a moment into her eyes. She took fright at his set face in which, save the tenderness for her, there was scarce anything of sanity.

"What—what are you going to do?" she asked, under her breath.

He clenched his hands, as he turned from her, and caught up his hat, which lay on the sofa. "Oh, I don't know, my girl! I don't know! My worst, I suppose."

He was flinging himself out of the door; but, "James!" she murmured reproachfully. He turned and kissed her. "In an hour," he whispered; and was gone, before she could utter one of all the pleadings that hung upon her lips. She tremblingly watched him untie his horse. Every movement of his hands was charged with an angry energy that terrified her. Her heart leaped in fear at the wrathful twitch with which he loosed the knot they had been laughing at together twenty minutes back; and she cowered at the ugly cut under which the pony shrank, as Deed set off at a gallop.

Was this the good, the gentle man she loved? She put her hands to her eyes to shield them from the memory of the look on his face, as he parted with her. It was like the look of unreason—such a look as one recalls in explanation of a terrible event, after it has befallen.

CHAPTER II

It was rather more than an hour before he returned, and Margaret had time to think of many things. She trembled at the thought of what he might be doing at any moment of her watching and waiting and poking of the fire. She recalled all that she knew of his hot and reckless temper; she told over to herself all that she had ever heard from others of the relentless fixity with which he carried out a thing on which he was resolved.

She knew sadly the quality of his temper of course; her experiences of it could hardly have failed to be numerous and bitter, in the time which had elapsed since she had known him. It was the chief flaw in his character. In accounting for it to herself she said, when she was not fresh from suffering from some manifestation of it, that no doubt it went along inevitably with his generous and impulsive

heart. She was ignorant about such things, and about men in general, but she had never known any one so entirely good and kind and open-hearted, and she told herself it was not for her to measure or question the correlative fault that must always go with a great virtue like that. She had moments of grave doubt about this, of course, and her doubt had been a minor reason among the controlling ones which had caused her to refuse him at first. When she finally discovered that she loved him, it did n't matter; nothing seemed to matter, then. She now thought of his temper as one of the things she should set herself to modify —or, rather, to help him about—when they were married. What was marriage for if not for some such mutual strengthening and improvement?

Something Vertner had told her when she first came, and at which she had laughed, at the time, recurred to her. It made her smile, still, but in a frightened way. Vertner had heard it in Leadville. It was *à propos* of the grim strength of purpose which every one felt in Deed. Some one had come to a young lawyer, there, to offer him a case, in which Deed was engaged on the other side, and had been asked to 'Come off!' "Ain't you got more sense," inquired the

practitioner, expressively, "than to take half a day out of a ten-dollar-a-day job to come and set me or to Deed, in a case where he's got the ghost of a show? Never saw him grip his fist, like that, in a court of law, did you? Thought not. Must is *must* about that time, young man! There ain't no two ways to a burro's kick. I've been there. In fact I was there day before yesterday. Beaten? No, sir, I was n't beaten. I was cyclonized. I was taken up by the toes of my boots and swung round and round with one of the prettiest rotary motions you ever saw; and banged against the top of Uncompaghre peak, out there. No one but myself would have thought it worth while to pick up what was left of me, I suppose. But I did it; and I picked up too much sense at the same time to try it again. Why, that man's got more knowledge of the law and more raw grit, and hang on and stick to 'n——." He questioned the air with uplifted arm for a comparison. "Well,——!" he ended hopelessly. "I'll tell you what it is," he went on, with renewed grip of language, "for them that likes monkeying with the buzz-saw, there ain't nothin' like it, short of breaking a faro-bank. It's strawberries and cream to that sort. But to peaceably disposed citizens, like you and me,

Charlie, there ain't nothin' at all, anywhere, like stayin' pleasantly, and sociably to home, and lettin' the saw hum its merry little way through the other fellow's fingers."

From time to time Margaret would go to the window, and look wistfully down the road. The expression on her round, shrewd, suggestive, wise little face at these times would have helped an observer to understand the look which made her seem older than her twenty-nine years: it was the authoritative look of experience. The look of over-experience that sometimes fixes itself, to the sadness of the beholder, on the face of a woman who has been down into the fight for bread, with men, had passed by Margaret's inextinguishable womanliness; but she had not led an easy life; and one saw it in her face—a face proportioned with a harmony that strangely failed to make it beautiful.

Her eyes, which were small and bright, were deeply set under a high and well-modelled brow, from which the hair was brushed straight back, in a way that must have been unbecoming to another type of face, but which was admirably suited to her own. In falling over her shapely little ears, the silky brown hair waved in a fashion pleasant to see. Her

mouth, which was small and daintily made, wore an expression of unusual firmness.

In conversation she would fix her animated hazel eyes on the face of the person with whom she spoke in absorbed attention, and when the talk was of serious things, a deep, far-away look would suddenly possess these eyes. She had an extraordinarily sweet smile; and there was a gentle and kindly soberness in her expression. She was well and compactly made. Yet her effect was unimposing. She seemed short and slight. She had a well-kept little effect in her dress and the appointments of her person; but no one would have accused Margaret of knowing anything about dress. She was rather discreetly clothed than dressed in the sense of adornment. She wore white cuffs at her wrists and a narrow collar at her throat, fastened by a brooch of gold, wrought in an old-fashioned pattern.

Margaret was not smiling when Beatrice came in some time after Deed had gone, and found her with her head pressed against the pane. She turned her tearful face away as Beatrice drew her to her.

Mrs. Vertner, one saw, had been quite recently a pretty woman and she was still young—a year or two younger than

Margaret. The brilliant expression, which had distinguished her among all her acquaintance in her young girl days in Newton, (the Boston Newton),—where she was still remembered as a clever girl who had made an inexplicable marriage, —was overlaid, for the most part by a look of anxiety and harassment, due to the conditions of her life. She made her housekeeping as little a sordid, crude, and ugly business as she could, and took its difficulties light-heartedly; but housekeeping in a Western town which has still to "get its growth" is at best a soul-wearing affair. Just now she suffered under the rule of a Swedish maid-servant who knew no English, and whose knowledge of cooking was limited to a fine skill in broiling steak insupportably, and a vain address in the brewing of undrinkable coffee.

"Crying, little one?" she asked, affectionately. "Won't you do something a wee bit like some one else, dear, one of these days, and let me be by to see it? That's a good girl." She kissed her, with a laugh. "But stay odd all the rest of the time, Margaret. I should n't like you if you were n't odd, you know—not even if you were ever so little less odd. If I want you to be conventional it is only for a moment, to see how it would seem. Come!

Other brides smile. Try one smile!" she pleaded. And at Margaret's helpless amusement, she snatched her from the window, and humming a vague air, which defined itself in a moment as one of the Waldteufel waltzes, she beat time for a second, laughing in Margaret's bewildered, tear-stained face, and caught her away into a romping dance.

"There!" she cried, as she sank upon the sofa, breathless with laughing and dancing. "I've shaken you into sorts, I hope; and you're ready for the ceremony; or will be if you'll ever get yourself dressed. Not that I call it dressed, to wear that grey—— Oh, I don't mean that, Maggie dear," she exclaimed at a pained look on Margaret's face. She crushed her to her in a devouring embrace. "Or, rather, I do," she added, honestly; "but I did n't mean to say it. No: you'd better wear it," she went on at some sign of hesitation from Margaret. "It will go beautifully with all the rest of it. Margaret Derwenter," she cried, with an affectation of seriousness, "shall I tell you something? You will never be married." She retired for the effect; but fell upon her with all the armoury of woman's peacemaking at Margaret's start. "Literal!" she cried. "Will you never take things less hard? As if I meant it!

What I did mean sounds foolish after you've taken it like that. But I may as well say it. I don't believe the marriage ceremony is going to marry you, as it does other women, Margaret; and you need n't tell me it is. If you are ever married it will be by yourself: yes, I mean it—by a kind of slow process of consent to the affair. Of course you will have a proper respect for the ceremony; and you will think it has married you. But women like you, Maggie —not that there are any—are not married in that way. Now, I was married when I left the church, and everybody knew it."

Margaret laughed,—not on compulsion this time, and catching her arm about Beatrice's waist drew her to the window to look down the road with her for Deed's coming.

Almost any part of Margaret's history, before the time when she began to teach, and, by a curious arrangement of her own, to see the world, must wrong, or at least mis-speak, in the telling, the gentle and sweet-natured woman she had become.

She had been accustomed to hear in her childhood that she had inherited her father's energy, and her mother's face. This did not strike her as going very deep. She was

aware, herself, of several unmanageable drifts in her that she might have understood better, perhaps, as derivations from her parents, if they had lived long enough for her to know them. Her father, who had gone to the Isle of Martinique as a young man, and had made a fortune in business there, had married, rather late in life, a Frenchwoman, a native of the island, and the daughter of one of its chief officials. Margaret supposed that she must attribute the unmanageableness that she perceived in herself to this French mother: that, at least, was the theory of her New Hampshire grandmother, with whom she had gone to live after the death of her father and mother.

Her grandmother did not care for foreigners, as she called them; but she loved the child, and during all the years that Margaret lived with her was particularly good to her. This was the more to her credit, since Margaret had, from the first, ideas. The habit of mind which she had inherited from her mother, had sometimes a hard time of it with the New England austerity; though the romance bestowed on her from the same source made friends in a curious way with the Puritan capacity for self-abnegation. Her conscience -perhaps one should say her indomitable con-

science—was altogether Puritan ; while it would be hard to say what we must call the ambition which gave purpose and meaning to all her young days. The abandoned pursuit of Culture for Culture's sake is at least not French ; and, as it is perhaps followed with the most pathetic sincerity in the Middle West, it cannot be called altogether a New England foible—though it must have been in its beginnings a New England idea. One suspects it of having been engendered in the bleak farm-houses on the New England hills, where the Winter is hardly less long than our American joke avers ; from which the dwellers emerge only for "socials," "mite societies" and lectures, and where the snow-bound solitude turns the limited diversion of apples, hard cider and hickory nuts rather wan before the Spring comes.

It would be a quarrelsome person who would not suffer any one to get what fun he might out of the idea of Culture for Culture's angular dear sake, no doubt ; and as an alternative to the apples and cider, the mite societies and the lectures, it has, certainly, advantages. But if it should be urged that the theory of life which it implies lacks ease, lacks curves, lacks atmosphere, lacks even—to say the worst of it, and have done—the sense of humour, only one who had a

great many such New England Winters in him ought to say a word. The Winters, though, would palliate worse things—things mistaken in fact as well as in spirit.

Margaret, in her pursuit of this mystic Culture, since it must be said, conceived of education, until her education was done, as an affair possessing length, breadth and thickness. It is to be feared that she even "improved" her opportunities. They were not many, poor girl, until she left the New Hampshire village for her first stay in New York, where she studied at a school in which she spent a year learning that she was the only pupil who regarded its advantages as precious privileges. Then she left it for Vassar, which was, at least, not touched with sham. She found here other girls with her thought about education; and she went about the erection of her structure of intelligence with an energy which presently sent her home to her grandmother ill. The structure remained her point after her return, however; and the reader who knows anything of this habit of thought should not need to be told that she looked upon it, not as a dwelling that she should one day inhabit, much less as a temple which should one day inhabit her; but as a shrine whose graceful proportions it was the

final privilege to set for ever within one's blessed sight. At nineteen Margaret was more in the way to becoming that distressing product of our felicitous new ways of thinking about women and about education the female prig—than a friendly biographer would like to record.

Her escape from such a fate was due to circumstances outside her control. In the midst of one of the Summer vacations she took up a copy of the *Springfield Republican*, to learn that the little competence left her by her father had been embezzled, with more important trust funds, by an unscrupulous executor. And, soon after, her grandmother died. Every Sunday morning, from the time when Margaret had come to her as a child, she had lain in bed—this estimable lady—thinking how she would change on Monday in Margaret's favour, the will which bequeathed all she had to a charity. On Sunday morning a late breakfast gave time for reflection on such subjects; but on Monday there was never any time at all. And on one of the Mondays which was to have witnessed the fulfilment of her resolve, she died in Margaret's arms.

The double catastrophe had many lessons for Margaret. She sorrowed for her grandmother bitterly out of the

simple and loving heart which no system of cultivation could have educated out of her; and she never thought of blaming the neglect which had left her with the problem of earning her living close upon her. The money lost through the executor's rascality troubled her solely as an educated girl: a girl with duties, with responsibilities to her self-development. It would be putting it too crudely to say that she grieved for the loss of the money, because one might have bought such a lot of Culture with it: travel, that is, and the leisure for study, and the sight of good pictures, and the knowledge of all the "cultivated" things. But it is only the expression that is at fault: her idea hovered very near this thought. And, as she could not have the thing in one shape, she determined to buy it for herself in another.

It was necessary that she should provide for herself; and she conceived the enterprising notion of making this necessity serve her purpose. She "taught"; but she gave the heavy-hearted word a meaning of her own by procuring, through a friend of her father, in Boston (after a year spent in school teaching), a position as travelling governess with a family which put several of her favourite novels to shame by treating her as one of the species.

She made the tour of Europe with these people, with what she called, in her letters to one of her college-friends, "most satisfying results." She did not mean to the business man's children whom she was teaching; but to what she might have called her own "mental progress." The business man, when he called the results "satisfactory," meant something separated by the distance between any two of the planets from the idea contained in Margaret's word; but his word was at least as much reward as she had expected, outside her salary, for her faithful efforts to decant some of her knowledge into the minds of the business man's children.

When she was back in America again, she recklessly sat down and waited for another engagement looking to the same ends. This time she wanted to go to Japan, and she kept the advertisement in which her wishes were succinctly stated in the *Nation* and in the *Tribune* until a family discovered itself intending toward Japan, and desiring a governess of Margaret's capacity, temperament and terms.

It will be seen that this was a woman of energy, of independence and of original ideas; but so much lies on the

surface. To make it at all clear how she contrived to reconcile these rather aggressive qualities to the softest and gentlest womanhood there need be, one must have known her. To be sweetly firm, to be gifted with the kind of lucidity that does not roil one's own commonplace muddle of a mind by its mere existence, to know, and not to know you know, to hold immoderate opinions in a moderate way, to be transfigured by energy and yet consent to the propriety of your neighbour lying on his sofa; to perceive that the boundaries of the State of New York, or even—though this is asking a good deal—the confines of the British Isles, do not limit the imaginable, not to say lady-like regions of our globe; in a word to be tolerant—these are great matters. It can hardly discredit Margaret with any reasonable soul to own that she failed, for the most part, to realize all these excellences; but they had become the tormenting measure of her ideal some time before she met Deed, on a visit to Beatrice Vertner (the one friend she had made at her New York school) at her home in Colorado.

It was mainly the travel which she had sought as gratifying her aspirations toward Culture, which disabused her of her young feeling about that *ignis fatuus;* the sight of

the various, the populous, the instructive world furnished her with an altogether new point of view from which she grew to pity the provincial Diana who had set out with such a fine courage to hunt down Culture with her little bow and arrow. And yet the Diana remained ; and the Margaret of ten years after the Vassar days was at least as remarkable for her likeness—in remote, illusive ways—to the Margaret who had one and the same conscience for the Temple of Culture, and for the Temple of Pure Right, as she was remarkable for her exquisite, her admirable and surprising difference.

The new notions of life begotten of going about and seeing things had led the way ; but no one who knew her well could have been at a loss to perceive the moulding force which had done the real work of change. It was her womanliness coming in upon her, at the same time, with its incomparable enrichment, which had taught her old vagaries the way to the graces of the new Margaret ; it was what one might almost have called her natural gift for womanliness which finally chastened her edges, and which, in shaping her young strenuousness to softer lines, lost for it none of the validity and justness and simple strength which had gone with her maidenly ways of thinking.

And yet it is certain that one is not reared in New Hampshire for nothing; that one does not spend four years at Vassar without bearing the Vassar mark; above all, it is clear that no one can teach for ten years—it may be that no one can teach for an hour—and live to hide the fact.

It was Beatrice who first caught sight of the familiar figures of the pony and his rider, coming up the road at a gallop, pursued by a swirl of dust. She could not be persuaded that she did not hear the baby crying; and descended upon the sound before Deed could reach the porch.

Margaret would rather he had not tried to find a smile for her. He looked a year older than when he had left her side. They stood for a moment when she opened the door to him, looking into each other's eyes. Then she cast her arms about him, and drew him to her with an impulse of protection—the kind of refuge against the vexations of the world that a woman offers to the man who is dear to her, as if he were the sole sufferer from them on the planet—and whispered some words in his ear.

"I am so sorry," she said simply, as she took his arm, and led him into the room, where she had made up a brighter fire against his return.

He sat heavily on the sofa, and stared at the blazing piñon sticks, with the look of a man whose fight is done.

He looked away from her. "We must n't talk of it," he said, after a moment. "It's no stuff to make wedding days of. I don't know," he went on, biting his lip, "how I am going to get my forgiveness that this should have happened as it has."

She came and stood by his side. "Do you begrudge my sharing your trouble, James?" she asked. "Would you rather have borne it alone? I thought that was what it meant to be——"

"What, dear?" he asked tenderly. He drew her down to him, and put his arm about her. She sank on the floor beside him.

"——A wife," she said, blushing faintly, and looking down.

Their romance was not less dear to them than if they had been younger: it was more sober, but not less valiant.

"Um" . . . . . commented Deed, with a wan smile, patting her hand affectionately. She sat, for a moment, in a reverie that took no account of their trouble, and was almost happy. But catching sight of his tense and stricken face, "Something has happened," she said tremulously.

"Yes: I thought the law could help me," he answered wearily. "It can't. If there were nothing else, I must have let him go with his plunder, and have found heart, somehow, to tell Philip that I had let myself be done out of his future, with a fool's trust."

"Nothing but the law? Then there is something else? There *is* a remedy?"

He did not respond to the joy in her tone. "Yes," he answered gravely.

She started back and rose from his side, all her fears alive in her face.

"James!" she cried incriminatingly. He sat silent, with his head in his hands. She regarded him for a moment in anxious perplexity. Then she reached forth her hand, and laid it softly on his shoulder. "You—you are quite sure you are doing right?" she asked gently.

He withdrew himself. "Margaret!" he cried reproachfully. "How could I do a wrong to him?"

"You can do a wrong to yourself. You can let a longing to right yourself carry you too far," she said bravely.

"Don't talk in that way, Margaret. There was but one

right and one wrong in the world. I had to have that right. What I have done is just."

"Oh, I hope so!" she cried.

He was silent for a moment. He was thinking of many things. Suddenly he turned his eyes to hers, and regarded her piercingly. He took her hands in an eager pressure. "What would you do for me?" he asked at last abruptly.

"My dear James, I——" began Margaret, startled.

"Would you give up all that I have meant to make yours for—for me?"

His intense gaze was unbearable. She turned away. "You know I would," she murmured.

"Don't think that because I am giving, I have the right to take away. It's not so."

"Rights, dear——? Must we talk of them? Don't you think . . . . ?"

"Well——?" he asked, trying to be gentle; but his restless anxiety got into his voice.

"That they stop, I was going to say, where love begins. But, James, you seem so far off—so strange." She laid a hand doubtfully upon him, and looked into his face with a questioning glance. "Would it reach you, if I said a thing

like that?" she asked. Her smile was pitiful. "Oh, my dearest, of course I don't care. How should I? Did I ever care? And now if it would make you happy——"

"Must it make me happy?" he asked.

"Would it be worth while to you if it did not?"

"Ah, well——!" he exclaimed inconclusively. And for some minutes they did not speak. Margaret watched his absorbed face and knitted brows with a thousand rising doubts.

He may have seen the pained look of inquiry on her face, for he took her clasped hands, and stroked her hair thoughtfully. With her elbow on the sofa, and her head in her upturned hand, she coiled herself on the floor, and regarded the crackling fire for a long time, in wistful absence.

She was glad when he spoke, though all her fears cried out against what he might say. As he bent over her, speaking in a low voice, she kept her eyes on the fire, "Tell me again it would not pain you to lose it all, Margaret. It is not merely money. It has many sides, and meanings. It is all worldly comfort, advantage, leisure, of course, but besides it is freedom—freedom to do the things you have wished to do,

Margaret; the things you have not been able to do. It's not fair to ask you until you have tested it. You don't know how much you would be giving up."

She smiled where she sat. "I know how much I should be gaining if—if it can serve you," she said softly, her head turned from him.

He observed her with keen, grave eyes, which, as he looked filled with tenderness. He rose and took her in his arms.

"Is this my reserved Margaret?" he asked. "Is this the quiet little woman who, a few months since, would scarcely own she loved me, and only the other day was protesting that her training had not taught her the language of affection?"

She hid her face. "What is it that you wish to do, James?" she asked anxiously, when she could raise it again.

He released her without answering. After a moment he took a turn up and down the room.

"You won't believe it!" he said suddenly. He went back, and flung himself upon the sofa, with a half groan. The fire had blazed up, and in its play upon his face Margaret read the torture that was going on in him. She was beside him again in a moment. "Margaret," he said, as he caught her hand once more, "do you remember the story of Samson?"

"Surely," she answered in wonder. "Why?"

"His locks were traitorously shaven. His strength, which was all his riches, was basely taken from him by one he trusted. Then his enemies believed they had conquered him, for his power was gone, and they had put out his two eyes. But in Gaza—do you remember, dear?—when they were gathered to see his shame, he put forth one last, mighty effort, and pulled down the temple over their heads, and his. The story has always had a noble ring to me,—I don't know why. To-day it comes back with special meaning. Would you mind reading it over to me, dear?"

Margaret gazed at him in trouble and uncertainty; but she went for the Bible which was her single inheritance from her mother. At home she always kept it on the table near her bed. Just now it was in the trunk, up stairs. When she had it, she brought the volume to him; and kneeling down with her arm on his knee and face to the blaze, where she could see him by turning her head, opened quickly to the place.

"'But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes,'" she began, "'and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass——'"

"No, a little further on, please," said he, keeping his eyes closed.

"'And it came to pass,'" she began again, toward the end of the chapter, "'when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house: and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

"'And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. . . . .

"'And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.'"

Deed rose abruptly, and paced the floor. Margaret read on, fearful of she knew not what.

"'And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

"'And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein.'"

Margaret dropped the book, and looked at Deed. He was standing quite still, listening in absorption.

"Was it not great? Was it not well done, Margaret?"

"I don't know," she said, with the touch of preciseness which, without her will, would often make its way into her tone when matters of propriety or morality were in question. She reflected a moment. "Was it right to kill so many for revenge only?"

"It was just. His loss was not a common one. It was his two eyes."

"But barbarous justice—don't you think so, dear? It would be better to suffer under the sense of the worst wrong."

"No, no," said he, earnestly, almost eagerly. "To me it seems nobly done. He did not try to save himself. He perished of his own will in the general ruin."

Margaret had long been watching him anxiously; but now, terrified beyond control, she burst forth, "Oh, James, what has Samson's story to do with you or me?"

"Everything! Everything!" he cried. "Has not Jasper taken my strength in teaching me to know him? Has he not taken my eyes in robbing me of himself, and of Philip's future, at a stroke?"

He paced the floor impatiently. She put forth her hand with an instinctive gesture of deprecation. His haggard face, with its look of determination, awed her. When she tried to cry out her voice failed her.

"Margaret!" he cried, pausing suddenly in his walk at some look in her face. "You would not have me bear it?"

"Oh, James!" she answered. "It is hard, very hard, I know. But, yes: I would bear it. What else is there for it?"

"What else?" he cried. "All else! Why, Margaret! Can you ask? Do you think I could live, and not strike back? Am I so weak a thing? Am I cheated of *all* my power, even in your eyes? Why, dearest——" He drew her to him, as she rose, with a tremulous motion, and surveyed her face. "Why, dearest," he repeated, "I have still Samson's power."

"Still Samson's power?" She repeated the words helplessly.

"The power to make him suffer with me," he said sternly. "The power to pull down the temple over his head."

"And yours?"

"Surely. Did you think I could not find Samson's courage for Samson's remedy?"

"But you will not! Surely you will not!"

"I have," he said, as he turned away.

Margaret bowed her head. "Oh," she cried, "you said well that I could not believe it." She kept her face in her hands, catching her breath with the sobs that shook her.

"Margaret! Margaret!" he besought her. But she did not heed. He turned away in desperation.

"Is it—is it irrevocable?" she asked, when she could command herself.

"Could Samson have built the temple again?"

"There must be some retreat."

"I have given my word."

"You can buy it back again."

His face hardened. "So Jasper might say," returned he. "Listen, Margaret!" he entreated. "I am within my rights—my legal rights. What would you have? May I not do what I will with my own? In his letter he says that he reckons his 'half interest,' as he calls it, at $75,000, and that he 'can't be expected to give up a thing like that.' An hour

ago I sold the entire range and cattle for $25,000, without inquiring his preferences. He *has* given it up," he said grimly.

She looked into his eyes for a moment in silence. At last she said, "Is this sale completed?"

"No, but I am morally bound to complete it."

"You shall not."

"What?"

"My dear James, you shall not. Oh, how can I argue such a thing, if you don't see it? It is cruel, it is wrong, it is wicked."

"You must let me be the judge of that, Margaret," said Deed gravely.

"Oh, James, why am I what I am to you, if I may not be your conscience, when yours—under frightful trial, I know—has left you? You have no right to do this thing." She came close to his side.

"Oh, there comes your teacher's theory of life," he cried in unbearable irritation—"your hide-bound New England conscience that will not see circumstances, that refuses the idea of palliation as if it were a snare, that finds the same wrong in an act under all conditions, as if killing were always murder."

"James, James!" begged Margaret, quite calm and brave now, "don't talk of me. I am anything you say. Think of yourself! Consider the life of remorse you are condemning yourself to. Distrust the false passion and pride that tells you you are right now. You are wrong. Listen to me, who have nothing to gain by telling you so. You are wrong." She spoke the words that came to her.

"Have I not the right to make him suffer as I suffer?" he asked coldly.

"I don't know. You have not the right to use all your rights. I am sure of that. It is what they are always telling us, but is it the less true -the world would be intolerable if every one demanded all he is entitled to. You must feel that. Self-surrender, self denial: all that are they only phrases in the books? Are they too big and fine for our every-day world?"

She paused for a thoughtful moment, and with a glance of infinite tenderness regarded him, where he stood restlessly gnawing at his moustache, and snapping his fingers.

"As if I need ask!" she exclaimed. "As if you had ever needed anything better than just ordinary Thursday Friday and Saturday for your goodness, dear! Don't I

know it? Who ever used more every-day generosity and kindli——"

"Hush, hush, Margaret," he insisted. "The thing's done, I tell you."

The fire, which had been dying down, leaped up, and glowed upon his face. The look she saw on it taught her patience. "Listen, James," she begged, fighting back the sudden tears, which, somehow, had slipped by her guard.

He shook himself free from her hand with a kind of courteous impatience, and walked to the other side of the room.

"Don't preach, Margaret, of all things."

She gazed at him sadly. "Suppose we wait until to-morrow morning to speak of this, dear," she said gently. "I can talk to James Deed; but his evil spirit I don't know." She tried to smile.

"I am quite myself," he said, almost stiffly. "Was it not I who was wounded,—and in the best part of me: my love for him? Why should it not be the best part which answers it?" He spoke with a kind of fierce calmness, as if he were endeavouring to be gentle and reasonable with her, and found it hard.

"Is it the best part which tempts to vengeance?" she asked wearily.

"I fancied you were calling it that in your heart," he said, with bitterness. "And if it were? Did not Samson call on Heaven for vengeance—that was his word—'vengeance on the Philistines,' and was he not richly answered? Was he not given strength for it?"

"Oh, James," she cried in despair, "how can I argue against such frightful sophistries?"

They were both in the tense mood in which the added word snaps the bond of friendship, of blood, of love itself.

"You need not," he said, as he turned from her. "We have had more than enough of argument. It does not change my intention. I shall complete the sale in the morning."

He was about to leave the room, but she called,

"James!"

"Well?"

"You must not." She caught her breath, and sat hastily upon the sofa.

"Pshaw!"

"I tell you you must not. I—I will not have it. I have my—my rights, as well as you, my rights as your wife who is to be. I will not have your property—*my* property, thrown away for a whim."

He came toward her quickly. She shrank involuntarily. Her face was white: she set her teeth.

"Do you mean that?"

She nodded painfully.

"It would have been simpler to say so in the beginning—not to say honester," he said with slow bitterness. "You might have spared me the pain of knowing that you could promise to give it all up, when you thought yourself secure from being held to your word. You might have saved your sermons."

It was like the agony of death to hear these things from him; but she shut her lips and bore it. If she spoke now, she knew that her tone must belie her words.

"A moment ago you said," he went on coldly, "that you had nothing to gain. Pardon me if I say that you seem to have had much. It may make

your sleep easier to-night, if I tell you that you have gained it."

He put his hands to his head in bewilderment, caught up his hat, and without a glance at her, left the room.

Margaret rose, and closed the door behind him. She stood a long time at the window, trying not to cry.

CHAPTER III

Eleven thousand feet above sea-level the dry air reaches the point of saturation with a kind of gasp and shiver. Philip Deed was sure of the storm in the air half an hour before the clouds began to gather. It was the day on which he was to meet his father, at Maverick; and he had set forth in the morning from Piñon, where he had spent his unprofitable year in mining, planning to reach Bayles' Park by one o'clock, and to take the railway there for Maverick, where he expected to arrive in time for the wedding. Cutter, who had failed in the mountains also, and whose arrangements for the future were indefinite, was going to the wedding with Philip. His family had always known the Deeds in New York and he and Philip were friends.

The air grew moist, and the sky darkened as they put their horses at the ascent out of Laughing Valley, into which

they had just come down from the other side. A mile up the trail they stopped on an eminence commanding the valley, to look about. A ray of sunshine shot a half-hearted glance from behind the clouds brooding above the way they were to take. The ray was instantly swallowed up ; but the valley was swept by a momentary radiance, under which it started dazzlingly fresh and green, and took the sudden gold on its face with a dancing quiver which almost excused its foolish name.

The range of hills over which they had just come rose behind Laughing Valley City to the North. To the South the exit from the valley was through Red Rock Cañon, between whose narrow walls the Chepita fled roaring. The sound reached them where they stood on their height at the edge of the cañon, above the scattered noises of the town, which, at this hour (just before the three o'clock shift at the mines) was as peaceful, and almost as noiseless, as if it had not been a city on all the maps.

Where the Chepita cast itself down out of the hills over Moshier's Rock, at the other end of the valley, they could vaguely see its white leap ; and then could follow its serene course through the town. Down at their feet they watched

it go brawling into the cañon. Quietly as it slipped through Laughing Valley City, the river gave a certain effect of life to the valley, which spread a vast green lawn at their feet, unbroken save by the huddle of buildings at its centre, and by the "dumps" of green or grey or red, which marked the mines outside the town. The close-ranked mountains looked down from every side upon the young city; and the only apparent points of egress to the world without were those by which the river entered and left the valley—the cleft in the hills through which the Chepita hurled itself upon the fall, and the cañon by which it swept away.

Philip Deed was giving up his mining at Piñon because his father wished it, not because he liked the easy prospect of a home and a bank-account held out to him from Maverick. The thing for which he actually cared was a life not responsible to its next minute—a life that should leave him altogether free to speculate with himself. At twenty-three Philip Deed was an interesting subject for prophesy. It would surprise no one who knew him if he should turn out to be a great success,—and this was Cutter's faith,—but the betting was against it. He had a fine, straggling army of talents, and for commander of them a gusty temper. The

sound sense that would often bless him was for the most part present in the hours when he did not need it, and when he would not have been anything but sensible, upon any temptation. He was wise upon impulse, and the propriety of his sentiments in his best hours merely served to shame him when he was less wise : they did not establish a permanent state of wisdom in him. He made mistakes as other men are respectable : from instinct. He often had occasion to denounce himself passionately. He had a noble and unthinking generosity, a warm heart and a habit of taking people at their own valuation, and of owing more than he could pay.

There was a generous touch even in Philip's incapacity—for it amounted to that—to perceive the delicate moment at which *meum* melts into *tuum*. It was a kind of incapacity to infect an entire character, and it infected Philip's; at strange times and upon odd occasion the fibre for which one instinctively looked as the accompaniment of other fine traits in him was missing : it was like a lacking sense, rather than a vice, as excellent people are absent-minded. It might nevertheless have been odious—Jasper said it *was*—if it had not been seen to be merely the obverse side, of his

generosity: what was his was yours, if you were his friend; and it followed as the kind of corollary to which no open-handed man would give a thought, that what was yours was his. Good fellowship was like that; it was one of the things that one did n't question. One did n't compel one's friend to ask for one's second coat, when one's friend was shivering; one gave it and asked no questions when the friend forgot to return it: that was the way of coats and friends. And when the need for a coat was one's own it was a poor compliment to one's friend if one could not trust him for as good an understanding of the transaction as one's own.

Philip had never reasoned it out—it was not the sort of thing to reason about—but this was, in general terms, his instinct about the whole business of give and take. He had an entirely good conscience about his money dealings, and obligations of every sort. He knew that he borrowed more than he lent, but that was because the borrowers did not come to him early enough. When he received a sum of money there were always a dozen tedious people who wanted it—people to whom he owed it: they got hold of it often before he could lend it to any of the half dozen borrowers who usually hang about such a man. About certain obliga-

tions of honour he had as sensitive a pride as that of his father, who never owed anybody a penny; but he would have postponed any ordinary debt to lend a friend in need ten dollars, and he would have had no more scruple in putting the gratification of some wish of his own before it. It was, in fact, often a race between the wish and the creditor: the kind of wish that it took some time and trouble to gratify was an advantage to the creditor. When the conditions were favourable he would often arrive first. Philip was, in fine, upon principle and in practice, always generous before he was just.

He would have found it difficult to explain his theory about the propriety of being generous to himself. It was involved in the foolish pride, not unlike a sense of caste, which had given him a belief, cherished in a careless way from his boyhood and now become an instinctive feeling in him, like a religion, that certain things were proper to him. Reduced to its obvious terms it would have become, like a number of our more obstinate inner religions, an absurdity. Philip got along with his religion by not reducing it—by not so much as thinking of it. He acted upon it. Was it that certain insignia, a certain ceremonial, a peculiar dignity were

an hereditary appanage of his station? But what was his station? If he had been brought to this, he would have urged that his station was to be Philip Deed, which might not be much, but was what it was. He could n't pretend to explain.

One of the more immediate results of this theory of the pre-eminence of the debt he owed permanently to himself over the accidental obligations incurred in paying it, was that his unpaid bills in Piñon, over and above the money his father sent him regularly to run his mine amounted to a trifle over $400. The several small debts making up this sum began to be pressing; and he was glad to be leaving Piñon, not merely because the mines he had been working for himself and Jasper offered no prospect of yielding ore in paying quantities, but because he saw no present means of paying these debts by his own exertions, and they had reached a point where it was inconvenient, and occasionally a little humiliating to add to them. He meant to ask his father to lend him the money. He would be able to pay him in six months; he knew where he could make twice $400 by that time; and meanwhile he would pay him interest. He disliked to be borrowing from his father in

the loose way he had used hitherto. They would make it a business transaction, and he should have his note.

"Is n't that Piñon Mountain to the right of the big dome of Ute Chief?" he asked, as they stood on their height, looking out over the hills.

"Yes; I make it out so," said Cutter. "Melancholy sight."

"Yes—oh, yes," agreed Philip heavily. "I've been thinking of our year up there: what an ass I made of myself dropping three or four hundred days into those holes in the ground on Mineral Hill."

"Ugh!" grunted Cutter.

"They were n't much as days, of course; but they were the best I had at the time. They might have brought me in a clear ten thousand or so if I had set them to work bank-presidenting, or something. Why think of it—a fellow might have married on the earnings of those days. And there they lie at the bottom of the 'Little Cipher' and the 'Pay Ore.' 'Pay Ore'!" he exclaimed scornfully. "Happy thought of its fairy godmother—that name."

"Well, I'm not banking heavily on the 'Little Cipher.' But it was luck enough for one day to locate the 'Pay

Ore.' The Ryan outfit are going to have those days out of the 'Pay Ore,' you know, Deed. There's stuff in that claim."

"Yes, I know," assented Philip indifferently, "low-grade stuff. I don't see how it helps me that it would pay to ship if it assayed three dollars better. It might as well be a thousand."

"Wait awhile. It *will* be a thousand—a thousand better than pay dirt."

Philip made a contemptuous sound; but his contempt was outward only. He believed in the future of the "Pay Ore," now that money enough was to be put into it to sink the shaft to the proper depth, as men believe in the woman of their secret ideal—the woman whom they shall one day meet and love, but whose virtues it is unprofitable to discuss meanwhile.

"That's all right," returned Cutter unshakenly. "I've been down in the mine. Ryan's going to make a big stake out of his lease of the 'Pay Ore.' Watch him and see. He might even take something out of the 'Little Cipher.' He and Buckham know what they are about. Who supposed there was anything in the 'Celestina' until they took hold of it

on a lease? And now look at it. Why, they were saying in Piñon yesterday that the last assay gave $1,000 to the ton."

"Pshaw, Cutter! I am ashamed of that bargain with Ryan."

His companion permitted himself a smile. "Well, you ought to be—the other way. You did n't get enough. Man alive, you don't suppose he and Buckham are here for their health. How many pairs of eyes do you think they need to see that you are next the 'Celestina;' and that the 'Pay Ore,' anyway—and perhaps the 'Little Cipher'—is a straight continuation of their lead?" He had raised his voice, but he lowered it to say, "Why, look here, Deed, I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll stake my reputation as a mining engineer that they have struck a true fissure vein in the 'Celestina,' and that it dips your way."

Philip laughed. "Your confidence is charming, Cutter—charming. If you will give me a note of introduction to the person you have in mind who is prepared to furnish me with board and lodging in exchange for such confidence as that, I don't see what more I can ask."

The silence that fell between them recognized the existence of the subject they were shying away from. It was an

hour since Philip had been handed his father's long telegram as they passed through Laughing Valley City. He had bit his lip and turned it over to Cutter. They had found no words for it since, and were still trying to talk of other things.

"I wonder if you'd mind, Deed, if I were to say what an awful cad that brother of yours seems to be," Cutter broke forth at last, while they still stood looking down into the valley from their eminence.

Philip ground his teeth.

"Hardly! It saves me the trouble. Oh!" he cried, venting the feeling he had been choking back in a helpless shout of rage, "to think of his coming it over father and me like that! Confound it, I believe I could have stood being swindled out of my whole future and have managed to pull a decent face about it if he had done it like a gentleman. But this . . . . ! The thing's so dirty, so small, so sneaking! Why, Cutter, it's the grade of midnight assassination. Fancy father! The favourite son!" He gave a scornful little laugh and dashed his hand to his eyes. "Damn the fellow, any way!" he cried. "I swear when I think of it, it seems too low a thing for any one who has a drop of my father's blood in him to have done. I was n't old enough when

my mother died to know her intimately; but I don't believe she was like that. And to think that I have spent a year in those cursed mountains up at Piñon, working that mine for him right alongside my own—rising early and going to bed late; giving up every Christian habit; denying myself every kind of decency of living—yes, forgetting how it might feel to live like a gentleman; and all of it just as much—every ounce as much—for his infernal mine as for my own; and I get this for it. I tell you, Cutter, some things turn you sour. The beastly ingratitude of the thing makes me so sick that I can't kick against it. I haven't any kick left in me. I believe some day, when I am cooler about it, I shall be sorry for the fellow for being such a devil of a cad. And to think that he is my brother—yes, and my father's son!"

"Pshaw! He'll never stick to that point, Deed. It's too indecent."

"Won't he!" cried Philip bitterly. "You've got a lot to learn about Jasper. He'll not only stick to it, but he'll prove that he's right. And what's more he will think so himself. Jasper wouldn't do anything he didn't think right. He'll think it right if it chokes him. He has done the right

thing, and done it at the right time ever since I can remember; and I've always admired it in him. A man can't help admiring a quality so remote from himself as that, you know," he said bitterly. "Jasper isn't the kind of fool to chuck away a year in a place like Piñon. He knows better, and I respect him for it. His discretion and propriety, that habit of his of doing the wise and sensible thing while I was lucklessly going to some new style of dogs every six months or so, and disappointing my father—you can't think, Cutter, what an impression that makes on a younger brother. Jasper's very schoolmasters used to praise him, and even then I knew they were right, and that I had earned my stool in a corner for shirked lessons. As early as that he had a sort of instinct for the buttered side of life, and you see he has n't forgotten it. You ought to have played marbles with a boy for 'keeps' to really understand a man, you know, Cutter."

"Oh, come!" said Cutter. "His habit of being right is n't going to help him to hold that ranch against your claim. Your father will have him out of that before we get to Maverick. Jasper is n't the only man who knows law."

"Humph! Poor father!" sighed Philip. He lighted a cigarette. "He won't have much heart left for law, I'm afraid. His way is a quicker way. I can't think what would have happened to Jasper if he had told that to father instead of writing it. Like him to use a letter for it! Father does n't bear things well, you know. They make him wild, just at first. It's part of Jasper's discretion that he knew better than to stand up and tell him such a thing. I believe father would have had to kill him."

"And that is the kind of man you think likely to sit down under such an injury and twirl his thumbs?"

"Hardly. He won't be sitting down. He will be raging about. But it won't do him any good. We've only got the barest facts; but you can figure out a good deal if one of your known quantities is character, and if you know Jasper's character you may be sure that he's behind the strongest kind of fortress, if it comes to that. The law can't touch him, I'll wager. Jasper always knows what he is about; he's got his earthworks piled sky high. You might as well try to storm that cliff over there." He pointed to the sheer lift of rock opposite them. "It would be a pity, I'm sure, if a man's going to abuse a trust, if he should n't

make a good job of it. Poor father! That's what cuts him up, I know. He trusted the fellow, you see. Trusted him! Heavens! He loved him! Pshaw! Let's talk of something else, Cutter. What's become of *your* trouble? Come, I don't want to monopolize all the fun. Tell me, old fellow," he said, laying his hand on the other's shoulder; "do you hear anything?"

Cutter bit an end off the cigarette he had just lighted, and nibbled at the tendrils of tobacco nervously. He glanced with a vengeful look at the stony wall opposite, as he cast the cigarette out into the air, and watched it fall in a wavering line into the cañon, a thousand feet beneath them. "No, nothing!" he answered at last.

"And you want to?"

"Want to? You don't suppose I have any will about it, do you? A man in love, as you may find out some day, Deed, is away past 'want' and 'not want.' It's all 'must.'"

"Yes," admitted Philip sententiously, "it's been described to me that way. But one would say——"

"Of course they would; and awfully easy it is to say, when it's somebody else; and the girl does n't happen to be the archetype of girlhood, and the one maiden arranged for

you from the beginning of time, and possessed of the only smile and the only droop of eyelid you have any use at all for, and all the rest of it. They babble about the happiness of love until a man has to try it, as he tries smoking, because it seems at the time about the most interesting experience one can buy: but it is a good deal like the smoking when you have taken a puff or two at it: your cigar *has* a Havana wrapper, 'as advertised'; it's the Hoboken filler that breaks you up."

Philip roared at the gloomy face with which Cutter said this; but his companion's countenance kept its ruefulness.

It was a year since Cutter's easy life had been given a violently new twist by Elsa Berrian's refusal of him. He had left New York immediately after in a passion of rage, humiliation and love; and his hurt was still fresh in him.

The day on which she refused him held more instruction for Cutter about the constitution of human society than he had gathered in the entire preceding twenty-four years. Perhaps most men can look back to such days, when life closed about them with a kind of rigour, and they fought their way through the desperate view of the excessive and useless hardness of things (which suggested suicide as a

natural, and not unpicturesque remedy), to the mixed doggedness and pluck that enabled them to rise next morning, and have a try, at least, at the inexorability of Fate. Cutter, when he had tasted the dregs of this species of learning, was, to his own sense, a stalking repository of melancholy wisdom.

He had thought his misery must make all things indifferent. But, when he snatched at Philip's suggestion that he should go West with him, he had not supposed it would be so unlike New York. He had what he called his "profession"—he had studied mining engineering for two years at Columbia—but the demand for his inexperience at Piñon left him plenty of time to wish he had not been in such a hurry to leave a life which was arranged for him, and which he understood, for the crude West. His dissatisfaction may not have been altogether unconnected with the fact that at home he had been a young man about town with a rich father who did not object to his idling until he should have found the thing he wanted to do; while at Piñon every one was a worker, and was grossly, even brutally, intolerant of any one who was not.

He was going to stay a year, though. He was resolved upon that. He would have felt it to be a confession that

he lacked "sand" to give it up earlier; and he was really oo heart-sick about Elsa to be able to think with patience of revisiting New York for a long time to come. It ended in his forcing his habit of laziness into regular application to such business as found its way to him, and, for the first time, he began to study mining engineering in earnest.

He felt after a few months of life in Piñon as if he had "had a great deal of nonsense knocked out of him." He liked the outdoor life, and, when he could keep the old Cutter under, he got along fairly well with the men with whom his business brought him in contact. But it was perhaps because, after all, he could not help letting them see that he could imagine nobler, not to say more interesting, examples of the race than they, that he was a failure at Piñon, when all was said.

It was not quite his fault. It was not to be expected that he should at once be able to rid himself of the New York theory of life; and that, other things being equal (though other things had a hard time of it to be equal under such conditions), a man should not seem somehow a better man to whom such words as Wallack's, Daly's, Del's, the Union League, the Academy, Brown's, suggested the same host of

associations that they suggested to him. This was of course no more than the deathless and invincible New York conceit which amuses the country at all times; but it was perhaps dearer to him than to the usual New Yorker, because he had for a number of years had nothing better to do than to foster it. It was his misfortune that he had somewhat less than the usual tact, which helps other New Yorkers to cloak their sense of an obvious superiority; but it was happily his luck not to be a snob in any sense or degree.

Philip, who had long since accepted the West, and whose direct habit of thought removed him from the temptation of remaining the critical outsider who analyzes the situation it is his main duty to be living, was never tired of making game of Cutter's crude struggles to be crude, and of his habit of pettifogging with his temporary Western lot. He had been accustomed to defend him when he was ridiculed in Piñon; but in the privacy of the cabin which the two occupied together on Mineral Hill he guyed Cutter's amusing fopperies as much as the camp could have desired. Cutter continued to apply his daintiness to the coarse exigencies of Western life with a smile; and good-humouredly went on being in his dress the most elegant rowdy that ever was.

He was a picturesque figure when in full regalia, with his fire-new chapereros, his nickel-plated spurs, his spotless sombrero, on which he kept a fresh leather band at all times, his English riding boots, and his crop. His revolver was of the latest make, and his cartridge-belt looked as if he never used it.

Cutter's faults, like this little foible of his, were for the most part on the surface. Beneath them all he was as simple, honest and manly as any one need be; and men who had need of a loyal friend sought Lenox Cutter. The self-confidence, which was not quite conceit, and the touch of selfishness which went with it, were of that not too insistent sort which women are accustomed to the need of condoning in the men of their acquaintance daily, and which men—because they know how much of both qualities a man needs to earn a living—are accustomed to tolerate so long as the like qualities in themselves are not trodden upon.

The clouds had been gathering while they talked and hung a threatening black bank in the West as Cutter, turning away from Philip's laugh, glanced at them.

"We are going to catch it," he said. "Shall we go on?"

Philip put out his hand from his pony to test the air. The harsh damp that had fallen on the day made itself felt between his interrogating thumb and forefinger.

"I must, you know. They will be looking for me at Maverick to-day. I could n't risk being snowed up down there in Laughing Valley City for a week or two. But you must wait, Cutter. There's nothing to hurry you."

"Pshaw, we shall get to Bayles' Park before the fun begins. Anyway, we'll see it out together, unless you want to get rid of me."

"You're a brick, Cutter; but you'd better stay. I am going to have company whether or no, I think." He nodded toward the town. "Down the trail there—do you see?"

Cutter, following the direction of his nod, saw a large crowd of men on horseback issuing from the town, which, a few moments earlier, had seemed depopulated. They had just passed the last group of cabins, on the outskirts of the settlement, and were riding at a canter up the first rise of the long hill which the young men had climbed half way. In the still air the talk of the company rose loudly. It was plain that an unusual event had called them forth.

"Let's have the glass," said Cutter suddenly. "Fact!" he exclaimed, after a moment. "There's a young girl among them—riding alongside the tall fellow in front. See?"

Philip took the glass Cutter handed him, and scanned the party. "By Jove!" He studied the shouting throng anxiously for a moment. "I don't more than half like the look of that crowd, Cutter. The girl—why, man, she's——"

"Rather! See how she bears herself at the head of that crazy lot. A lady? She's a queen."

"Yes," assented Deed musingly, while he kept the glass upon the moving group. "But the man in the centre—what do you make of him?"

"Which?" asked Cutter, taking the glass. "The clerical-looking chap?"

"Yes, I thought he looked like a clergyman."

"He is too, by George. See here, Deed, there's going to be a circus here of some sort. We'll have to see this thing out."

Philip nodded. "Do you notice how all the gestures point his way; and how they seem to be shouting at him, and keeping him in the centre while he sits his horse without a word. Do you know, I believe *he's* the row."

Cutter's restless pony would not stand while he turned the glass on the crowd again. He got off, and putting an arm through the rein, made an attentive observation.

"It can't be," he said at length.

"What?"

"That they are running him out of town."

"Why, my dear fellow, it fits in perfectly with all you 're in the habit of pretending you believe about the cloth."

"Stuff! I never said they were rascals," said Cutter, keeping the glass to his eyes. He put the glass down, and remounted.

"What do you make of the girl's relation to him?" asked Philip after a moment.

"Oh, daughter, I suppose. She does n't look as if she belonged to any of the rest of the mob."

"Careful there, Cutter; careful!" He was straining his eyes through the glass. "Some of them may be Englishmen. In fact, I think I see a Viscount. That's no way to speak of the imported article."

The group was coming within easy eye-shot. A shout that went up at the moment sounded close by.

"The imported article has a domestic howl," said Cutter.

"Yes; and it's getting precious near. We must n't let them find us studying them."

With one of the silent twitches of the rein understood by cattle ponies, they put their horses into a canter, and passed out of sight of the crowd by a turn in the trail, which writhed about the hill until, near the summit, it pushed forth in the direction of their journey, and began to find its way loftily along the walls of Red Rock Cañon. The winding trail brought them in a moment to a point just above that which they had left, and looking down from behind a pile of rocks shielding them from observation, they saw the party halted there. It was a shaggy mob, not carrying out in its dress its suggested English birth and breeding.

It seemed to be made up of all classes of the town's population. Those in the group at the left, with clay-grimed trousers stuffed in their boots, were from the mines, and, in one or two instances, the candles which they had apparently neglected to put down in their haste were carried by the steel hooks upon their fingers. The two wearing white shirts, (the rest were clothed in the flannel of the West) had a hard look, and might be gamblers. The shopkeepers, who had come along to see the fun, were to be distinguished by the

eccentricity of allowing their trousers to drape themselves outside their boots. There were a couple of cowboys, with chapereros, spurs, and sombreros; and with lariats coiled about their saddle pommels. Most of the crowd carried their weapons in sight. Some of the revolvers were to be seen peeping from saddle holsters. The cowboys wore their "guns" in cartridge belts about their waists. It was a threatening-looking lot; yet, when the leader drew his fat black revolver from his belt, and began to toy with it, his playful use of it seemed merely a waggish substitute for the hems and haws of other public speakers.

The crowd, grouping itself about him, arraigned the clergyman before them, and somewhat apart (still on his horse), with that eye for the scenic and dramatic which plays its unconscious share in all the extra-legal functions assumed by the people in the country beyond the Mississippi. The tone in which the leader addressed the clergyman was peremptory, certainly; but his address had its humorous moments, and once,—when, from the pitch of his voice, the listeners above guessed that he was burlesquing the hortatory clerical manner,—the guffaw greeting the bit of farce showed how the sovereign people may find rewards

even in the solemn and painful duty of administering justice.

Philip watched the scene intently. "We shall have to take a hand in this," he whispered at last. "They mean to lynch him."

"No, no," answered Cutter, under his breath. "The leader is beginning on a set of resolutions. They don't resolve at lynching bees. They act. Besides, what would they be doing with the girl? They're running him out."

Philip said nothing, but glanced thoughtfully at the clouds, which had been folding hill after hill while they waited, and had now totally obscured the mountains which, in fair weather, seemed so near Laughing Valley City that it appeared at times as if one might touch them by stretching out his hand. The vapour scurried close above them. They knew that their own hill must be out of sight from the town. The air grew chillier.

"Perhaps they might better lynch him," said Philip, at length. "Do you remember when they ran that tin-horn gambling outfit out of Piñon? It was just such a day as this has been—all sun until ten o'clock. You surveyed the 'Little Cipher' and the 'Pay Ore' for me that morning;

and the weather could n't have been fairer. But how it got its back up after they were escorted out of camp ! It was n't an hour before the town was trying to find itself."

"Yes," admitted Cutter. "It snowed."

"Snowed ? You could n't see the electric lights until you ran against the poles. And those fellows, wandering toward shelter in that storm, without a horse, and with no telegraph poles to guide them to Castaway Springs . . . . I know, you always say the Vigilance Committee could n't suppose it was going to snow. But when they brought the bodies in the week after—do you remember ?—it was awful to see the camp find its conscience. Absolutions would have had a livelier sale than whiskey in Piñon that day, I've often thought."

"The wind is n't right for an old-fashioned blizzard to-day," said Cutter, divining his thought. "You and I and the minister will get through all right if they'll only start him. But they'll have to get a move on soon."

"I was n't thinking of him," said Philip.

"Why, great heaven, Deed, you don't suppose they are going to send her along ? "

"Send her ? No. But she'll do what she likes, I think ; and you don't believe she'll desert her father, do you ? "

Deed took the glass from its case again, and directed it to where she stood withdrawn at a considerable distance, out of earshot, gazing on the scene with a face of anxious misery. He had not seen her closely before. She seemed a quite young girl. She might be twenty or twenty-one ; not more.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, in a low tone.

Cutter took the glass he offered. "She *is* pretty," he admitted.

"Pretty!" cried Philip.

Cutter smiled. "Well, do you want to go down and rescue her? I'm with you."

"From what? Don't you see what delicate consideration and courtesy they use toward her? See the tall one standing guard over her privacy with averted eyes. And did n't you notice, as they came up the hill, how first one and then another would ride forward to see if there was anything he could do for her? Why, those fellows are knights, you know, Cutter, when it comes to regard for a woman—especially a woman above them. By George, she has an air!" He spent a long moment watching her through the glass. "She is the Princess they treat her like : and she can unbend, too. See the gracious smile she

gives her subject-captor—the tall fellow. He's been offering to fetch her an ice from the North Pole, and she has declined, with the sort of grace that makes denial a favour."

The leader folded the paper from which he had been reading the resolutions, and stuck it in his belt. Philip, turning his glass on the minister, caught the glance of uneasy scorn with which he awaited the next movement of his persecutors. It was violent only in its sarcasm: they lifted their wide-brimmed hats as one man, and made way for him to pass. The unanimity and silence with which this was accomplished would have been impressive, if it had not been rather laughable. The minister winced, but straightened himself immediately on his horse, and rode by the ordeal of the row of eyes, fixed contemptuously upon him, with proudly lifted head. Jake Devine, the leading saloon-keeper of the town, bridled in imitation of his haughty carriage, and a smile ran about. Maurice continued to look before him, implying his indifference as well as he might by the walk out of which he scorned to press his horse. The crowd seemed under the spell of its own silence, and no jeer broke from it until the minister had passed the last man, and was on his way up the hill.

A jocose stone or two pursued him amid the derisive yells that now rose, and one of the group, creeping nimbly up behind, smote the horse resoundingly with a cudgel. The beast gave a snorting bound, and leaped forward up the steep at a gallop. The clergyman's hat—an English parson's wideawake—was blown from his head by the sudden movement, and his dignity was scattered upon the wind which wafted it from him toward the crowd, and which blew his thin locks out behind as the horse scampered up the uneven ascent, reckless of rocks and turns.

Philip had seen the girl's streaming eyes as she started to follow him and was gently withheld; and now he saw her dry her tears with a start of indignation, and point imperiously to the flying hat. The tall young man beside her made after it, and returned it humbly to her. She nodded her thanks, and at the same moment, with a dexterous hand, wheeled her horse, and with a smart touch of the whip set off at a run after her father.

The thing was so quickly done, that no one had time to interfere, and they all stood gazing stupidly after her for a moment. Then the tall young man gave his pony the spur, and followed her. His animal's clattering hoofs on the rocks

urged her horse on, and he did not overtake her until she was rounding the summit on which the young men awaited, unseen, the issue of the scene below. He appeared to entreat her ; she shook her head vigorously, and put his hand down from her rein with a firm, but not unkind briskness. She gave him a smile through her tears ; and he rode on with her.

The young men followed. It had begun to snow.

CHAPTER IV

The Rev. George Maurice's difficulty with the Vigilance Committee at Laughing Valley City was the climax of the ill-will which began to show itself against him in the town a month or two after his arrival there from his last parish, in Dakota. He had failed with these people not merely because he lacked the cardinal virtue of the West—adaptability; though certainly he was tactless enough, and would often rasp the sensibilities of those whom he would willingly have pleased. Nor had he failed altogether because he was arbitrary, and dictatorial; his congregation could no doubt have borne that cheerfully from a man they respected: indeed it is not certain that they might not have liked him the better for being a bit of a bully.

If they had been asked to lay a finger on the source of

their dissatisfaction with him they would probably have had to own that they could n't. That was not a thing to make them less dissatisfied, however. He was, in fact, one of the men to whom it would be a pleasure to attribute something forgivable—like a definite sin. It was perhaps his indefinite weakness that was unpardonable.

One might say, for example,—as certain people did—that he was not too scrupulous about money matters ; but it could not truthfully be said that he was unscrupulous. It might be alleged that he did light things, unbecoming his cloth ; but his behaviour was never clearly unseemly. He could easily be proved lacking in consideration for others, or, if one liked—and there were usually several who liked—for his daughter ; yet when one would say "selfish," the remembrance of a reckless act of generosity would recall itself, or the recollection of the strain of self-sacrifice in him, declaring itself in acts that enslaved to him those whom they helped, and endeared him to a following among the young of all his parishes ; and condemnation was laid by the heels.

Maurice did not pretend to be perfect. If he had made any such pretence he would, for instance, have felt bound

to bury Carstarphen and Telfner when they died of small-pox, brought to Laughing Valley City by a party of China-men. The men had lived, like other miners, in disregard of every sanitary precaution ; no measures had been taken for disinfecting the cabin in which they had died, and to go to it to read the burial service over them, and then to accompany their bodies to the grave, on the side of Car-bonate Mountain, two miles from town, was, as a matter of fact, a serious risk. It was unfortunate that those duties of a minister of the Gospel, which, in personal experience of them, one must, of course, qualify a trifle, should be so simply conceived by the friends of the dead men. His refusal to perform the last office for the men, though made with the proper reluctance and regret, and reasoned cogently was taken extremely ill.

The miners who had come to ask his services as the only minister in town, "cursed him out," as they afterwards told the indignation meeting. It was at this meeting that the resolutions were adopted, in which the word "coward" occurred six times—exclusive of the indignant preamble.

The resolutions, which, after the received custom, gave him twenty-four hours to leave town, expressly excepted his

daughter; and the ladies of the place had arranged among themselves to keep her by them, and look after her, with the purpose of sending her after her father, if she should desire to go, when he should be settled somewhere. This plan had, carelessly enough, reckoned without Dorothy's energetic will, it was found, when the time came; and they let her go with the band that escorted him to the edge of the town because she very quietly would have it so, not imagining it necessary to extract a promise from her to go no further.

Dick Messiter (a young man whom the ladies knew to have a mill-owning father somewhere in Massachusetts, and whose occupation at Laughing Valley City was that of Superintendent of Cincinnati Mining Co. No. 3) had offered to go along and look after her; and, in spite of the lamentable occasion of the association of the two young people under these conditions, the circumstance gratified that dumb novelist, or perhaps it is merely romancer, which seems to lurk in every woman's breast. It struck the ladies of the town, as a beautiful situation; and they would have been the last to interpose an obstacle to the crisis which is somewhere toward the top of every situation.

They trembled appropriately for the clergyman, when he was led out in the midst of the shouting mob, and they exchanged the observation that they ought not to have thought of such a thing as letting her go, when they saw her riding among the noisiest of them. It would have been hard if they could not assuage their remorse by the suggestive spectacle of Dick and the girl riding side by side up the hill. If one looked at the matter from this standpoint it was clear that the mob could not be too noisy, and, in a harmless way, it was even to be hoped that it might prove obstreperous : it would be a pretty opportunity for Dick.

The trail over which Philip and Cutter followed the three riders clambered difficultly along the walls of Red Rock Cañon ; or sometimes it would dip into it, or wander quite out of it, and take its way along the table land above. Bayles' Park, where they were to find the train for Maverick, and where the railway terminated for the present, lay in one of those green and sheltered hollows, in the penetralia of the hills, known to Colorado vocabularies as a Park. For a good part of the year, the parks—which are a kind of small paradise to the traveller who comes

down into them out of the mountains—keep a Spring festival, and if anyone supposes that there are hill-gnomes, he must be sure that it is on these fresh and flower-starred lawns that they hold their revels. At all events, the hills water and refresh them, as if they would keep their ball-room bright—or perhaps it is with the hospitable thought of maintaining one guest chamber among their unfriendly rocks; and every mountain traveller knows how to praise the shelter it offers.

Bayles' Park was still well nigh a two hours' journey forward, however, and the snow had begun to fly more thickly. The noiseless coming of the storms in which men and beasts are lost in these mountains is their most awful effect: one could die more easily, one feels, in the worst riot of tempest. The snow fell silently about them as they rode, piling the folds of their great-coats, and their ponies' flanks, with its stealthy increase. The wind, which blew the flakes in their faces blindingly, was smitten soundless by the solid curtain of white through which it passed to reach them. The world was filled with snow and silence. It had grown very cold.

There are often such snow flurries in the mountains; and

then, in a few moments, sunshine again. Philip and Cutter consulted with each other, and did not believe it would last. But they agreed that it should make no difference if it did. They could not turn back and leave those in advance to take their chances, even if Philip was ready to give up the wedding. So people will agree while their feet are still warm : and they pushed on doggedly, as the fall grew heavier.

The telegraph line followed the trail, save when, at rare times (led on stubby iron poles), it would go forward, for the sake of a short cut, in a dizzy run over the rocks jutting from the cliff above them. Where the poles were set along their path they were higher, and when the snow was most blinding it was still easy to make out the road by them. But the poles were presently less plain ; and the sullen murmur of the Chepita rising steadily from the chasm which opened at the outer edge of the trail, a measureless void, warned them to use their eyes before they used the reins by which they would sometimes guide the horses.

" Look sharp,there, Deed ! " shouted Cutter, suddenly ; and Philip withheld his pony in time to save himself from the gulf.

The pony backed in terror, and when Philip got him started forward again, Cutter's horse refused to budge. Cutter

alighted, and led him. The animal came forward reluctantly, cowering before each step, and eyeing the way before him doubtfully. The snow-fall appeared suddenly to grow more dense, and the river, down at the bottom of the cañon, which had marched with them until now to a soothing melody, seemed suddenly to shake itself free from the silence of which it had been part, and to give forth a muffled roar and shout.

Cutter looked back for a sight of Philip's face. He could touch his pony's nose; but the rider was a vague spectre. Cutter gave a prolonged shout.

"Helo-o-o-o-o."

They were not three paces from each other; but he could not be sure whether the answer was an echo, or Philip's voice. He pressed his pony back against Philip's. They caught at each other's hands as the animals came together.

"I was afraid of this," said Cutter hoarsely, with the fear which we find after the event.

"Yes," answered Philip.

The frightful huddle and scurry of the big flakes came between them, as they peered in each other's faces; and

their voices reached each other dully out of the pall of snow.

"Think of those people!" said Philip, after a moment, in which they let their horses stand. "Think of that girl!"

"Hellish!" muttered Cutter, who had had no comment for the business while they watched it.

"Come on!" said Philip briefly; and Cutter understood. It was true: they must find them. And at the moment they heard a vague sound like voices, in advance.

Philip's pony would not move quickly enough, and he threw himself off, and jerked him forward.

"You heard?" he asked.

"Yes."

They pressed forward, and presently came upon the group halted in the middle of the trail, bending over the girl, who had been taken from her horse, and was being plied with brandy by the tall young man. Her father, who was rubbing her ears with snow, would raise his eyes from time to time desperately, frowning and blinking at the storm.

She had not fainted. She was merely exhausted by the storm, and numbed by the cold. The spirits seemed to re-

store her. She looked up at sound of the shout of greeting with which Philip and Cutter made their presence known, and descried their figures.

"My horse——" she murmured to Messiter, who was stooping over her; and he and her father raised her up, and set her on her pony, while Philip put himself at the animal's head.

Philip shouted something in Messiter's ear, as he came around in front of her animal to take his own by the rein.

"To be sure!" answered the girl's cavalier. "Had n't thought of it."

Messiter did not catch what Philip added; but he replied to the question he guessed in his voice, "Yes; near here. I know the place well enough when the weather has n't got the blind staggers. Blast the snow!" he shouted, rubbing his eyebrows and moustache, and mopping the little segment of face which showed between his high muffler and low fitting cap. "Brown's Cañon, don't they call it?"

He was near enough to see Philip's nod.

"A cut in the rock, and the cave just inside of it? Beyond the Fifth Cascade?"

"That's the place," said Philip.

They set forward for it without delay, each leading his own horse, except that Philip took Messiter's besides his own, while Messiter led the girl's. Cutter, who did not know the cave, brought up the rear with the clergyman, who made no attempt to hide from him his disapproval of the storm and of the entire situation. Cutter had never heard such pleasant-hearted, even mellow, grumbling. The man had a charm of manner which one felt through the snow itself. In front, the two young men discussed the whereabouts of the cleft in the rocks (which was known as a cañon, for no very good reason), and of the cave. About the place itself, Philip knew best, having bunked in the cave for a night, when he had come over the Pass the year before, on his way to Piñon : but his companion was much more familiar with the trail.

They went peeringly forward, dragging the trembling horses. There was always an uncertain moment after they had lost sight of one telegraph pole, and before they could make out the next : and at these times they felt cautiously along the rocky wall that soared into the air on the inside of the trail, and did not venture toward the outer edge. The horses tried each step inquiringly before taking it ;

and the two men in the lead, advancing into the unknown with such courage as they might, would often pause to take counsel with each other's ignorance and helplessness. It was impossible to say where anything was in this night of snow : all of their world was that next step which they could see ; and that step might always plunge them into the world which no man has seen at any time. The cold seemed somehow to numb the thought, by sympathy with the bodily pain and bewilderment which intense cold brings. The girl, who had not their resource of motion, was crying in silent agony from it, Philip saw, when he made way at a turn in the path for the young man to lead her horse by him ; and he pressed his flask of whiskey into her hands. They were so cold, and the men's mittens she had drawn over her gloves so clumsy, that she had almost dropped it ; Philip caught it up as it slipped from her, and shouting to his companion to hold on, asked her by a motion to raise her veil, and pulling himself by a jutting boulder to her level, put the flask to her lips. She was very pale ; and the smile she extorted from herself for thanks was pitiful.

Sometimes the trail turned sharp corners ; and once they found themselves at the edge of the precipice, and the cry

of the river leaped up to them through the storm with a sudden loudness. The two in advance shuddered back from the sound, clutching at each other and feeling blindly through the swirl toward the cliff on which their lives hung. Shouldered firmly against the wall once more they paused for a weary and discouraged moment to shake off the snow, and to take heart for another venture into the awful mystery of white.

The death which might lie before them was certain where they stood, from snow and cold; and at last they dared question the wall again with advancing hands. Philip was sure the cañon and its cave could not be far. But the storm created its own far and near. Ten paces were far—one might have to lie down and give up the fight at the end of them—the second step was not near; one might never take it. The wind had risen to a gale: the cold searched their veins, and their limbs began to answer their wills uncertainly. It was time they found shelter. One of the horses stumbled, and could not rise until Cutter felt his way back along the bridle rein and helped him up. But when he tugged at the reins again the pony would not move.

"We shall have to give the poor beast up, I'm afraid," he said. Philip went back and spoke a heartening word to the pony—it had belonged to him in the mountains—and the animal came along for a few paces, and stopped again, when it became necessary to repeat the action.

It was all done in silence. For half an hour no one had spoken, when Philip shouted, "The cascade!"; and there reached their ears as they halted to listen, remotely, as if from a great distance, the steady, down-beating pour of a waterfall. The sound triumphed over the clamouring river, and the loud-breathing wind, though it seemed so far away; and hope blessed them again.

When the wall opened at last to their weary hands, and discovered the cañon, and, a moment later, the cave, they had just strength enough left among them to get the girl from her horse, and set her within the cavern. They sank about her exhausted when they saw her safe; and for a long time lay powerless to help her or one another.

Philip was the first to find his feet.

"Here, Cutter! Stop that! Wake up!" he cried. Cutter was dozing in the dangerous sleep in which men die from cold. He shook him violently.

"Let me alone," grunted Cutter; but Philip caught him up, and seated him against one of the walls of the cave.

"Wake up! Do you hear?"

"Oh, come off!" exclaimed Cutter drowsily.

"See here, do you want your head banged against these rocks? They're sharp, I warn you."

Cutter started awake. He cast a listless glance over the cavern which was high and spacious, with boulders scattered about the floor. The roof and sides were toothed and rutted, and showed everywhere sharp points of rock, at sight of which Cutter rubbed his head ruefully, and having found a smile, knew himself again. "Got a match?" he asked.

"No: but I think you have."

"Fact." He fumbled for the silver match-case, with the figure of the humorous young demon atop, which was one of the relics of his Eastern career as a young man about town.

"Good!" said Philip, energetically. "Then we'll have a fire! There's a sort of room just back round the curve in the rock there, unless I am out of my bearings, and a thing Hicks and Baxter used to call a fireplace when

they were living here on a grub-stake. You'll find some wood. Get up a fire if you can, while I look after this poor girl. Sing out when you're ready, and I'll fetch her back."

He spoke rapidly and urgently, and Cutter got himself on his feet and made his way with stumbling steps in the direction of the rear of the cavern. Philip watched him anxiously a moment : he had asked him to go, to give him a reason for bestirring himself ; but he feared he would drop asleep again, while he went about the kindling of the fire. But there was no time for concern about Cutter. He stood upon his own stiff legs with a groan, and made his way over to where the girl sat propped against the wall of the cave.

Her head was drooped upon her breast ; but she was not asleep, and she looked up with a lifeless smile as Philip bent over her. He made her take another long pull at his flask, and then snatched off the heavy mittens which Messiter had given up to her, and peeling off the thin gloves underneath, fell to chafing her hands as briskly as his own benumbed arms would let him.

After a moment, when she began to look about her, he ran over to the prostrate figure of the clergyman, and shook

him alive, and then punched up Messiter. When they had found their feet, they came over and helped him; and the girl was able after a time to reward their common efforts with a look into which the heart and courage had a little returned. She began to seem again something like the girl who had cast off the restraining hand on her rein and galloped up the slope above Laughing Valley City after her father; and, when they judged it safe, they bore her in among them to the fire which Cutter had cried out awaited them. The ears of one or two of them had been nipped; but none of their limbs had been frozen, and, with the fire in sight, the men began to dance about, flinging their arms wildly, and beating their hands upon their legs in search of their lost circulation, and suppleness of joint.

She laughed at their crazy motions, where she sat cuddled in all the wraps they could muster for her in front of Cutter's roaring fire; and they smiled back at her amusement.

"Whew!" shouted her tall cavalier, taking off his heavy gloves and blowing on his fingers. "We forgot to shut the front door after us. Don't you people feel a draught?"

She gave him a mirthful nod. "That's the etiquette of

cave-mouths," she said. "You must always leave them on the latch! It's in case we should have visitors. Oh, think," she cried, in sudden terror, "if there should be any one else out in this storm!"

"Heaven help them!" said Philip, "or show them the way to something like this."

"Yes," said Cutter, drawing a musing sigh, as he settled himself by the fire. "I don't know how it was with you, Deed, but there were n't many minutes of stand up and take it left in me, when we found this."

"Yes: it's very nice we're here," she said thoughtfully to Philip, who had come over to her corner, and was standing above her, asking if there was anything that could be done to make her more comfortable. "It was awful!" She paused for a long moment, in thought of it. "How did you happen to know this place? Only think if you had n't come up with us!"

Philip perceived that she did not know that he knew —that they knew. He pulled himself up, with an inward start. He saw that what he had been about to say would have presumed on their common acquaintance with the scene on the hillside above Laughing Valley. It was evi-

dent that she had not seen them, as she swept by their post of observation on her flight to join her father.

"Oh, your friend would have remembered it. It was he who piloted us here?——Mr.——."

"——Messiter: Mr. Richard Messiter to the minister who baptized him: to everybody else, just Dick."

"I should never have found it without Mr. Messiter."

"And we should never have found it without Mr. ——?" She hesitated, in her turn, as she looked up into his face.

"Deed," supplied Philip.

"—— Deed?" she repeated. "Oh!" she added thoughtfully. "I wonder if you know a Mr. Deed who——." Philip waited for her to finish. "Why, he once took me quite informally out of a burning building. Our school was on fire. It was in a village—a Pennsylvania village—and there were no engines. The boys from the other boarding school across the way formed lines and passed buckets. It was at night. He happened to see me first at a window from his place in the line, and ran in and carried me down stairs. The fire, just for that one frightful moment at the window, was worse even than the storm we've escaped, I think. Wasn't it fine of—of that other Mr. Deed, Mr. Deed?"

"It *was* fine," said Philip, looking down into her glowing face. "I'm hoping I can prove kinship with him. What was his Christian name?"

"A rather odd name—Jasper."

Philip started. "Did all that happen in a village called Aylesford?"

"Yes. How do you know?"

"Oh!" laughed Philip uncertainly. He bit his lip.

"Is it some one you know, then? How very nice!"

"Yes," said Philip, "it is some one I know—my brother."

Dorothy exclaimed her surprise. "Then you must have heard my story long ago. I thought I was telling you something new."

"It was new," returned Philip, without animation.

"Of course. I ought to know that he would n't say how he had done an heroic thing. It would n't be like him."

"No," assented Philip, "it would n't be like him." It was true that Jasper was not a man to exploit himself. He recognized the trait in him, on reflection, without cordiality. It was part of his propriety. He would long ago have said to himself that to boast was crude.

"But how very odd that you should be his brother!" cried Dorothy, returning to her original surprise. She drew the saddle blanket with which Philip had covered her feet closer about her.

Philip burlesqued his thanks, and, with a little "Oh!" of appreciation, her face melted into a smile. "I did n't mean——," she began imploringly. She joined in his laugh. "Do you call that fair?" she asked.

"What?" inquired he.

"Entrapping me, like that."

"Have I said anything?" retorted Philip unblushingly.

"No, but you've made me. Or perhaps I said it myself, but the meaning is yours."

"Must I mean what you say?"

She pretended to muse. "You must n't say what I mean," she answered, looking up at him with a smile that enchanted him. The name, Maurice, suddenly detached itself as he met her glance from the haze of memory in which it had been floating since he had heard it. Since she had mentioned Jasper he had been casting back for the origin of this memory. He recognized it now with a start. It was from Jasper himself that he had heard it. A myriad memories

went buzzing in his head. Was it possible? He recalled a school-boy passion of Jasper's of which he had known a very little—as little as younger brothers, just learning to smoke, are thought fitted to hear of an elder brother's love affairs—and had guessed a great deal: as much as such brothers commonly guess from slender premises. He had never seen the girl: it had all happened while Jasper was away at school. But he remembered the name now. It was Maurice.

A pang without meaning or reason passed through him as he glanced at her again. She and Jasper had once been lovers, then. She had permitted him to know her in the intimacy—the sacred intimacy, the intimate strangeness, of betrothal. The thought gave him something like a physical shock. With his knowledge of his brother's falsity fresh in his mind the idea filled him with an empty, retrospective anger for her. He felt as if she had been profaned, and he believed his pang to be wholly for her.

In the silence that had fallen between them while he pursued these thoughts, he discovered himself to be studying the face which she turned, now, half toward him and half toward the fire-light. There was certainly a nameless

expression in it which made the thought of any homage to it lower than the finest peculiarly intolerable. Philip fancied that he liked the sweet seriousness of her face even better than its prettiness ; but he was not sure, a moment later, that he did not like its unconsciousness better than either. She had less than the usual American pallor ; and in her cheeks two bright spots of colour, which had fled before the exposure through which she had passed, began to show themselves unassertively.

Her gaze had a certain charming freedom, and in all her motions she was singularly unafraid ; but this consisted with a remote touch of reserve which never left her ; and which was constantly causing one to rejoice the more in a confidence that was in every expression of itself a new gift to the observer, because, in its openest moments, it seemed always to withhold a part of itself. In the same way the sober look, which slept upon the verge of her lightest glances, enriched and gave a special value to the dancing light which would come into her eyes at any challenge of her attention. The eyes themselves had been meant to be grey, apparently ; but one of them had rather agreeably failed on the way to greyness, and had a fleeting tinge of

brown, in some lights. A little more pronounced and it might have been a blemish : as it was, it was a part of her indescribable charm. Something in the modelling of her cheeks left the full view of her face a trifle disappointing, perhaps ; but this was because her clear, and almost perfect profile promised so much.

As she sat in the half-darkness, her face thrown into relief by the fire, she was certainly extraordinarily pretty. Her shapely chin was well in the air, her little mouth—she was in all ways made upon a little pattern—was pursed in meditation, and her straight, sensitive nose was cut with particular clearness against the light. It was not her nose which disappointed in her full face ; it was incontrovertibly very good. Her hair, which had taken several tumbles under the late stress, showed that shade of brown which you felt like thanking her for combining with her eyes and complexion, and had, as well, that pretty crinkliness, and excellent habit of waving or curling at unexpected moments, which one knows.

The pained thought which had drawn Philip's musing glance to her was being replaced by an untroubled pleasure in her beauty as he was roused from his preoccupation by

Cutter's voice, inquiring of her from across the fire, "Cosy?" Their common plight seemed to beget a species of respectful intimacy among them; and they all spoke as if they had always known one another.

"Very!" assented she. Dorothy Maurice had been born in the South, of a Southern mother, and her voice had the melody and vibrant sweetness of the voice of Southern women, without the accent and pronunciation which it would be difficult to prove altogether desirable, but which is pretty, too, if you like. "We might almost be happy here for a week, if we could keep warm so long, and if we could find something to eat. Don't you think, Mr.——"

"Cutter," he said; and her eyes met Philip's with another smile.

"Don't you think we might find a larder somewhere about if we looked? It isn't possible that the miners who left this wood for our fire would stop at that."

Cutter glanced at Philip interrogatively; and at her hint they explored. Houses wander dissolutely from street to street in Colorado towns, in wheeled pursuit of the real estate market; but provisions which have once found their way on the backs of burros to a prospector's home in the mountains

are less vagrant. After a Summer's work a prospector would be in a poor way who had not something more valuable to load on his pack animals than the jerked beef, coffee, and canned fruits and vegetables upon which the young men presently came.

"Uncommonly white of them to leave so much canned hospitality on a shelf for us, was n't it?" said Cutter, exhibiting their discoveries.

"Dear me! All that!" she said. "I should think so! They must be very nice fellows. Did you say you knew them, Mr. Deed?"

"Yes; as one knows men who take you in for the night, and do the handsome thing for the wayworn traveller. I spent a night here when I first came over the Pass. They were working a claim a little way on down the trail, as I passed them on horseback. It was rather late in the afternoon, and when I asked my way of them they told me I'd better let them bunk me for the night. I'm afraid they did n't leave these good things here with us in view, quite; but if they had known we were coming along it would have been like them. They will be back in the Spring, I suppose, to begin work again. I hope they won't miss what we shall have to borrow from them."

"Oh, I dare say they won't mind," said the clergyman, who had been silent for some time, while he thawed himself out by the fire. "Politeness is rather wasted on the rough people one meets in this region, I find."

"I don't know that, sir," said Messiter. And Philip, who was about to protest, conceived in time that the clergyman was not without reason for his feeling, and forbore.

"Ah, well, *I* do, you know!" returned Maurice courteously. "An odd business, that, Dick, was n't it?" he said, with an uneasy humour. "Were you by chance in the place they call Laughing Valley City this morning?" he asked suddenly of Philip. The intention to ascertain, if possible, how much these two strangers knew of the affair on the hillside was obvious; but Philip responded, as if he had not perceived it.

"We came through Laughing Valley City in the morning from Piñon," he said.

"Ah!" said Maurice. "Then we passed you very likely on the road without observing you."

"I think very likely," answered Philip, disingenuously. "We stopped for a while once a little out of the road." He

saw her rising flush : and wished to spare her even if the clergyman did not care to be spared.

Philip saw Miss Maurice draw a sigh of relief as he made this reply ; and she rose at once, and set about making the coffee—or such coffee as was possible without milk. The sugar they had.

"Any tobacco?" asked Cutter, as Philip came over his way.

Philip offered him a bag from which the best of the contents had been spilled in fighting the storm : and knelt beside him to strike a match. He seated himself near him, next the fire. "Mighty poor business, this," he said as the tobacco began to glow in their pipe-bowls, and the smoke made a home-like fragrance in the air. "I shall never get to Maverick in time for my father's little affair."

Cutter smiled. "Why, you monstrous ingrate!"

"Oh, of course I'm thankful it's no worse, but when a thing's no worse, who would be so stingy with his wishes as not to want it better? Plain luck is n't enough for a man. He's got to have luck *glacé*."

Cutter roared until the echoes answered him : and they all

looked his way. "Man! Man!" he shouted. "You don't want luck any more *glacé* than to-day's, I hope."

"What amuses Mr. Cutter?" asked Dorothy, coming towards them unfolding a ragged red table cloth which she had found, and which she was about to spread for them on a square of rock.

"One on me," said Philip. "He wants to know if it's cold enough for me. May n't I help you, Miss Maurice?"

She let him endeavour as much as he would in the helpless helping which young men are accustomed to offer young women in such things; and which is doubtless so much better for being so little effective.

As they spread the cloth between them on the rock, Dorothy used the opportunity of her position opposite him to observe him attentively, for the first time. She thought him less handsome than Jasper after a moment's inventory. She immediately added that he was better looking than she had fancied in her casual glances. His broad-shouldered vigour had its own value, and she did it justice in recalling Jasper's effect of shapeliness. Philip's robust build wanted symmetry, and his strong face, tanned by exposure to the weather, and undeniably a little freckled, had the look of

force rather than beauty. It was not upon a pattern and failed at important points; but it was in no danger of confusion with other faces of equally simple and rugged cast. His grey blue eyes, derived from his father, had the quiet look of power: they fronted her squarely when he caught her look, in an amused and kindly twinkle. Less gentle things looked out of their depths unaggressively. With his wide, full forehead, the large mould of his face, the sensitive nostrils and firm under-jaw, he had the look, Dorothy thought to herself, of a man who can do and make do.

She reflected that he seemed, much less than Jasper, to have himself on his conscience. One could hardly use his long stride to whom it had ever occurred to wonder how he might look in walking; and he would certainly have made sure, after their fight with the storm, of his hair and the sailor knot straying out of sight under the collar of his flannel shirt, if he had felt the responsibility about his appearance which she remembered in the Mr. Deed she had known. The gods playing at bowls would be a sight valued out of proportion to the consideration in which the game is held, and Dorothy found a peculiar entertainment for her

thoughts in the spectacle of all this lustiness and vigour spreading a table cloth with her.

She smiled when the idea occurred to her, and as they failed for the third time to lay the cloth true between them' she caught the ragged thing out of his hands, with a righteous hesitation about her enjoyment, and began asking him questions about Jasper, as she went on to lay the cloth and set the table herself. Philip answered mechanically. The thought that this sweet girl had once been Jasper's affianced wife became more tormenting, more shameful, as he perceived her charm. He caught himself staring almost rudely at her in the frequent pauses of their talk—abandoning himself to speculation about the affair. How could she ever have cared for him? He had saved her life: had she not just said it? That would be a permanent fact for such a girl—a reason for a life-long gratitude. But besides: everybody liked Jasper until they knew him very well. Some of them liked him afterward. It was one of his talents—making himself liked. She seemed still to like him herself; all that she said implied it. Was it a lover's quarrel that had parted them, perhaps? Did she still love him? He smiled to himself at his concern. All human contingencies were

absurdly remote. He knew very well that they might never leave the cave alive.

They hung shawls and some tattered blankets, found in the bunks, at the crevices and angles of the rocks, for her, when they were seated at last around the flat bulk of rock which she had divined to have served as the miners' table; and they spent themselves in entreaty of her to discover or invent another draught which they might shield her from, until Philip suddenly bethought him of the horses, which they had been obliged to abandon at the cave mouth. In the mortal exhaustion which had overcome them all when they found shelter, they had known nothing better to do for them. It occurred to Philip that perhaps they could be got into the cave.

They thought it a joke when he proposed it. But when they saw him serious, Cutter and Messiter volunteered to venture out with him; and, after what seemed a long time, they returned covered with snow, having found all but one of the ponies, and got them into the outer cave. Their whinnies came to them from there piteously; and Dorothy was for trying if they would eat jerked beef or dried peaches. She went out with Philip when their little

picnic meal was done, and brushed the snow from their flanks with a clothes-brush she produced from the bag that was strapped on the saddle of her own pony.

"What would be the horse for coffee?" she asked; and at Philip's, "Water, I'm afraid," she drew a sigh. "And we have n't any more than what we found in that little cup of a spring. You see, Mr. Deed, we must get away from here as soon as we can for the horses' sake, if not for our own. I'm afraid they would n't care for the week I was proposing, even if we should. Poor fellows!" she murmured, as they set up their long-drawn moan again.

They all rose when she returned to the inner cavern, and made a soft seat for her with blankets on the flat rock next the fire. Dick Messiter and Cutter were clearing away the traces of the meal they had just eaten on it. They took turns in fanning from her face the smoke which would sometimes be driven back down the chimney into her face, by the wind still whirling at its worst, without; and they piled the wood lavishly on the fire for her comfort, until, with a practical instinct, she went over to the corner in which the wood was, and pronounced against the reckless use of their scanty store.

When she was seated again on the daïs of rock, which raised her a little above her court (who, ready to do her bidding, sat or lay about her, coiled into such ease as they could manage on the rocky floor), she looked a smallish sort of monarch; and, humouring their attribution of despotic power to her, she queened it with a gentle gaiety among them, issuing her commands in the royal plural, and admonishing our good Earl of Deed, and our right worthy servant, Sir Lenox Cutter, with benignant severity. When Dick was beckoned imperiously to her side, he knelt in humbleness, and, with a tap of her riding crop on his shoulders, she said, with an air she knew, "Sir, I dub thee Knight," and cried, "Rise, Sir Knight Dick!"

Her unconsciousness of Messiter's devotion was a pretty thing to see. Her unconsciousness, as I have said, was one of her charms: it was pleasant to observe her modest diffidence of all that touched the thought of self-valuation, and to perceive the impossibility of her ever coming to feel the world's thought of her. But it was especially nice to see how she would not know the love that followed all her motions with pursuing eyes; and yet how she could give herself so unthinkingly to him in every word.

Philip, because he would occasionally catch the familiar glances that often passed between them, judged them lovers with a man's haste. But a more instructed eye would perhaps have seen how the divine unconstraint of her attitude towards him might very well be a secret pain to Messiter ; for sometimes a light would come into his eyes by which one might almost guess how he might be hating her for liking him so well.

CHAPTER V

Margaret had not seen Deed since the morning he had flung himself from the house. She knew nothing of him save what she had lately learned: that he had been called to Leadville the same afternoon to argue a case, and that he had gone. The information of the town regarding the sudden abandonment of the wedding was equally scanty.

All that day, until far into the afternoon, Margaret sat waiting his return with patient certainty in Beatrice's little parlour. Tears were easy while he was in trouble; but she could not weep for herself. She sat watching the long stretch of road leading from the house down past the church in which the wedding was set to take place at half-past four. A desolate, hunted look crept gradually into her stony gaze, as the cuckoo-clock in the hall told off the half-hours, and he did not come. She rose quickly, biting her

lip to repress the tears that began to flow readily enough, as Beatrice came in at four o'clock. Beatrice's face trembled with her own emotion ; her eyes were wet and red, as if she had been crying ever since Margaret had last seen her, when she had looked in, at the slamming of the door behind Deed, to ask what had happened. Margaret caught Beatrice's caressing arm away.

"Let me go," she said hoarsely. "You can't help me," she added in a hard, uneven tone. "No one can help me!" She choked back a sob. "Oh, can't you see that——" A surge of heart-sickness rose in her throat. She turned from Beatrice's pitying face, and ran up the stair.

There were very few wedding garments to put away ; but one may drop as many or as scalding tears as one could wish on a quite small spray of orange blossoms.

It all seemed so strange, so impossible, so trivially outside reason and experience. The orange rind on which one slips and breaks a limb, the elevator that happened to be here and not there, the train that was on the other track—how motiveless, how needless, what a littleness of fortuity! She could not explain how it had happened. It was like a great grief

which simply comes upon one ; which befalls without our agency. She had spoken—had lied to him, if anyone liked the word better—in the irresistible utterance of a feeling stronger than herself. That he should do what he proposed was unthinkable, intolerable : she could not let him blight his life like that. For good or ill she had to speak ; and now, though the event itself was much the most anguishing thing she had known, the only part of it she would have done otherwise, if it had been to do again, would have been to avoid the lie, somehow.

She would not allow Beatrice to blame him when she let her into her bed-chamber next morning. The shock had affected her physically, and she had yielded to Beatrice's earlier insistence from outside the door at half-past seven and remained in bed. It might have been possible to listen to accusations of him if her own heart had gone out yearningly to him in forgiveness. But she was frightened by the hardness against him which she felt to be growing in her. Something almost like rancour began to prosper side by side with her love : it seemed to have warrant in the tenderness which no event could really diminish—perhaps it grew out of it.

If he would, no one could venture to say what the desecration of a woman's inmost life must be through the intimacies, the familiarities, the endearments of a betrothal which comes to naught. The exchanged amenities, so infinitely right and sweet because marriage follows, become each a separate indignity and horror when it does not. To Margaret, who took all matters over-seriously, whose training had erected barriers against these things, each of which had been broken down with a pleasant pain of its own; who cherished, who almost loved her reserves, there was a new and subtler misery behind every pain which could have tormented other women in like trouble. To cast a glance, the most doubtful and fleeting, back upon this one romance of a life curiously lacking, hitherto, in all emollient experience of this sort, tore her with nameless pains. She felt as if she should like never to see a man again.

She had given up all thought of his return the day before, she fancied. But when Beatrice entered with the morning mail she stretched forth her hand with the impulsive certainty that there must be a letter from him. She perceived when Beatrice reluctantly shook her head, that she had secretly believed that he must still come back. It was

because the thing was still too incredible. Did men, then, belong to a different race? Was there one loyalty for them, and another for women? Was there another tenderness, another forbearance, another love? She had never had a brother: Deed was the only man she had ever imagined qualities for; she did not know about men—were they like this? Could it be that they knew how to justify such things to themselves—that there might be cruelties indigenous to the conscience of men, which women must not blame because men could not know them to be such? Perhaps to know all the wrong there may be in a wrong, one must have the gift to guess all the poignancy of its consequences; and she saw that no man could really understand her humiliation.

It was the lot of a woman to be chosen, distinguished, called apart,—made to believe that for one man she was different from all the rest: it was only the extremity of that distinction that could measure the shame of the credulity cast back in the face, the innocent faith become a thing to bite the lip and flush with pain at thought of. She did not lessen her own offence. Coming hard upon Jasper's perfidy she saw how it must have maddened him. She loved him, and, imagining his suffering, pitied him from her heart. But

all her smarting pride, the selfhood wounded to death, cried out against the cruelty of this desertion on their wedding-day. Cowering under the indignity which seemed to have stripped her of self-respect, she could not be sure of the validity of any judgment of the miserable woman she had become. His act had beaten her down. She was sickly, unsure of herself, of life, of what she must think. But she knew the dumb resentment that grew slowly in her for the helpless bitterness against him that it was. She loved him. She supposed that she must always love him. But the injuriousness of the thing he had done stifled in these first hours every gentle thought. When the memory of it was hottest in her she would set her teeth in still wrath.

There was another thing. It would seem as if the most straightforward of women must have, somewhere in their depths, a kind of sense for indirection, which they can never quite forgive men for not understanding in them. Margaret had wished him to believe her: she felt that his whole future and hers had hung upon his crediting her lie. But this was, unexplainably, a very different thing from liking it in him that he should have believed her. Deed had not closed the door behind him before she had

said to herself indignantly that he should have known her better.

There were moments when it all seemed different,—when she compassionated his situation, condemned herself as the cause of it, and accused herself passionately for accusing him. He would be suffering as well—not in her way at all, but worse, perhaps, because it was impossible to know how bad suffering might be which was outside one's comprehension. He must be thinking what she had said the final faithlessness. At these times she would say to herself that she could not wish him to think it less. If it had been what it seemed it was as bad as possible, and she would have liked to have him hate her.

But when echoes of the scandal stirred up in the town by his abandonment of her began to come to her ears, the springs of tenderness dried in her. The two daily papers published at Maverick—having the fear of Deed before them—had reported the barren facts with what they meant for a picturesque reserve, and speculated about the affair with what seemed to them a self-denying decency. Beatrice kept the papers from Margaret of course; but her boy turned innocent busybody and brought a copy of one of them to her

in furtherance of an enterprise of make-believe which Margaret had joined him in. Her eye caught the audacious headline ; and before she knew it she had read a dozen lines.

She buried her face in her hands in shame : alone with the child she blushed as hotly as if all the world looked on. In fact it did see her : that was her feeling.

She shed no tears then ; but when Beatrice came in at twilight to light the lamp, she saw that she had been crying. It was not precisely for the comments of the newspaper. She had been thinking of the lines of a poem :

"Be good to me ! Though all the world united
Should bend its powers to gird my youth with pain,
Still might I fly to thee—Dear !—and be righted—
But if thou wrongst me, where shall I complain ?

"I am the dove a random shot surprises,
That from her flight she droppeth quivering,
And, in the deadly arrow recognizes
A blood-wet feather—once in her own wing."

After Beatrice, Margaret found it easiest in these first days to see Dr. Ernfield, whom Mrs. Vertner had called in immediately. Margaret had liked Dr. Ernfield long before ; and she liked him still better in observing gratefully the devices of kindness by which he referred her prostration

solely to physical causes, and the delicacy with which he implied that she had had no history previous to the moment of any of his calls. They had been on almost intimate terms before her wedding day; and she was grateful for his attitude in proportion as she perceived the difficulty to which he must be put to maintain it.

He had been interesting to her, during the month she had passed in Maverick before her wedding day, not merely as a man—though he was an unusually interesting man - but because of his situation. He had left a prosperous practice in Boston to come West in search of health. He was still under thirty, and had won his success very young by making a speciality of diseases of the nervous system; but he had paid for it, so to say, with himself; and he was in consumption. Beatrice, who had known him in Boston, was very fond of him, and in the first month of Margaret's stay he had been often at the house. It was the only house where he felt at home; he was practising his profession in Maverick to avoid the stagnation of idleness, but he really knew no other family, and he had found that to have known people even slightly in the East is a tie when one comes to meet them unexpectedly under the shadow of the Continen-

tal Divide. Beatrice, on her part, was accustomed to say that he was very nice. She perhaps meant by this that he had the gift of helpfulness, of sympathy, which, perhaps, is not especially common among men. Margaret had thought she saw how this faculty, comfortable as it may be to a physician's patients —not to go into the question of his friends—might be ruinous to a sensitively made physician ; she had perceived that the excess of his sympathy with the work he had done before he came to Maverick had been merely by way of devouring him.

It was pitiful to remark how his disease had him in its clutch. The sinewy lines of his big body, designed plainly for the use of a strong man, had begun to waste before the attacks of his malady. It was observable, however, that he was still strong of limb ; and the look of his face—kept alive by his ardent and commanding glance, and hidden, for the most part, by a thick brown beard—was scarcely the look of a sick man.

It had been a pleasure to Margaret to see this sturdy fellow —who had the effect, in spite of his weakness, of confident strength—ramp up and down Beatrice's little parlour, with his hands in his pockets, expounding his theories of health and

disease—theories which fascinated Margaret by sinking instinctively for the moral spring underlying all large theories of health ; or anathematizing the whole system of living which gives us the damsel known to discussion as the "American Girl"—a creature whose tenseness might not be half bad, Ernfield owned, for the spectator, but was death to the girl. And then it had been still pleasanter to hear him counter this with the story of nervously wrecked young lives, which Margaret saw, around the corners of his modesty, he had won back to the normal way of life. He never spoke of having cured anybody. He would sometimes own that he had taught a person here and there how to live. It had seemed to Margaret that he had accomplished this by transfusing a portion of his own life into each of these persons : for it was obvious that such patients as these must always have drawn their new life, in great degree, from his life : that—a cure being in such cases so much an affair of sympathetic understanding, of a brisk, urgent, imperious individuality—they had lived at his expense.

The thought of this strong, fine fellow, who had given his young manhood to the business of reinstating others in life, doomed to a death against the halting wretchedness

of which no hindrance could be opposed, unless it existed in the air of Lone Creek County, had been too painful to Margaret for endurance.

Margaret's frank liking for him and the gentleness of her manner toward him, springing from the compassion for his situation to which she could not give other expression, were perhaps part of her charm for him ; but that which had really drawn him to her was the constant charm residing in her sincerity, her simplicity and directness ; in her goodness ; in the irresistible need in her to front all questions in their highest phase—above all in her gentle womanliness. In the three weeks that had passed after her arrival, before Deed and she were ready to lay themselves open to the town's comment, by announcing their approaching wedding, Ernfield had had time—in ignorance of her betrothal, and wholly without Margaret's suspicion of what was happening—to fall deeply, miserably in love with her.

It was not precisely his fault ; but his position, when he ascertained it, gave him the sense of moral turpitude he would have experienced if he had allowed himself to become enamoured of a married woman.

It was just as well, he said to himself : he had deserved

it. A man who, in his condition, indulged the thought of connecting his future with another's for longer than one of those radiant moments of monstrous and baseless hope that must visit even the hopeless, was properly condemned to such an awakening. This reflection should have made it easy to think of Margaret's wedding with equanimity; and certainly should have silenced the thrill with which he heard of Deed's desertion of her on their wedding day. Its effect, however, was to fill him, before the day, with a gloomy reluctance in her presence and a fear of meeting her honest eyes; and after it to shame and daunt him with a clear vision of the meanness of the hope that began to live tremblingly in him.

He writhed under her approval of what he saw she took for his tact and delicacy, when he was forced, after the event, to visit her in his professional capacity. He felt like a scoundrel when he heard from Beatrice that she could bring herself to see no one but him and her, for the present: that she could not bear that any eyes less friendly and familiar should look upon her grief in these first days. Her trust humiliated and abased him. He wanted to tell her what a scamp he was. He could have blushed at sight of

the humble light of thankfulness she turned on him from her weary eyes, as he constructed a theory about her indisposition which referred it to purely physical causes. To see how her pride smarted under this blow in every fibre; to see how she was ashamed of being ashamed, and yet not abashed to let him perceive it, became intolerable. On the second day, in the mere necessity of putting an end to it, he ordered fresh air for her: he told her that she must go about.

Beatrice went over the house on her daily duties, with a grieving face. Margaret's position pained her to the heart. She could understand how she might have partly brought it on herself, with the noblest motives; but nothing could even shadowily justify what Deed had done. She called his act by the hardest names to herself, when Margaret would not hear her denunciations. It was small comfort to talk to her husband.

"What are you worrying about?" he would say. "You ought to be throwing up your cap on any reasonable theory of friendship. It's an escape for both of them. You don't think they would have been happy, do you?"

"I don't know," returned his wife frankly. "Don't you?"

"I think," said Vertner ambiguously, "if they had not been—especially Deed—it would not have been for lack of hard trying—especially Miss Derwenter's."

"You think she might have tried too hard," suggested Beatrice quickly. "Yes," she owned, after a moment's meditation; "Margaret has that way. Perhaps she rather—insists."

"She *does n't* know quite when to let up," said Vertner in the tone of admission. His wife had to smile. "It's a virtue—knowing when to spare."

"And you think Margaret has n't it?" asked Beatrice, as anxiously as if she did not feel that she entirely understood Margaret's sweetly-intentioned severity, and as if she had not reasoned with herself, and with Margaret about it.

"Well," owned Vertner, "I think she might consider it not quite moral."

"No," said Beatrice vaguely, as she helped him on with his coat. She had followed him out into the hallway to see him off for the day. "Perhaps not."

"And Deed would n't really enjoy that after a bit," said Vertner as he adjusted the fur collar of his coat. "He can take things hard himself, and he does, but not in her way, and he does n't take *everything* hard. There's a sort of sense

of perspective about Deed: that's his humour. He has his varioloid moments."

"Yes," rejoined Beatrice in sad musing, "and Margaret has n't. I know that. All her moments are acute. She goes conscientiously through the whole disease, whether it's a question of a pin or an elephant."

"Well, perhaps you can see then, if you've got to that point, how Miss Derwenter would be the very best wife in the world for a man who takes things in bulk—in Deed's whole-souled, passionate, hearty way. There's nothing equal to a gingerly, conscious, penny-wise way of looking at things for a wife for such a man."

"Ned, you sha'n't say such things of Margaret!"

"Oh, Margaret's all right," said Vertner in a tone of conviction as he put his hand on the knob. He really liked her when she would let him. "It is n't her fault that Deed is n't built to appreciate her. She could make plenty of men ecstatically happy."

"What kind of men?"

"Well, my kind," returned her husband, audaciously. "I should always be ecstatically happy anyway, you know; and all that she could do for me would be so much clear gain."

After these talks with her husband nothing but a long conversation with Margaret could put Beatrice right again. She enjoyed the play of her husband's mind of course, but there were occasions for seriousness, and this was one of them. She found Margaret serious enough, yet even she would smile dismally sometimes at the thought of certain contrasts. The concern which she had given herself during the month preceding her wedding-day (the month in which she had made acquaintance with Maverick) as to whether she should be able to like the West struck her, for example, in her present forlorn case as food for a sad amusement. She had not been afraid she should not get along, as the phrase is: she was accustomed to managing so much as that for herself in all sorts of queer places. But it had occurred to her that, even with Deed, the West, as a permanent place of residence, would leave a great many needs in her unsatisfied. She had not dared use adjectives about Maverick; she might have to live in it, and she had the forethought to avoid attaching labels to the place by which even her own thought of it might finally discover itself to be bound. But it was at least undeniable that Maverick lacked a Public Library. She had thought she

should induce Deed to return to the East when he had won back the fortune he had lost the year before he had offered himself to her. Her ideal was a suburb just out of Boston.

Nothing had taught her so incontrovertibly the force of her love for him as the willingness she had found in herself to face for him the contrary prospect: for her heart had sometimes sunk grievously during her first fortnight at Maverick; and once, when she thought she perceived from something he said that he was really fond of the West, that it suited something in him—his sense of humour, perhaps; she did not know—her heart had gone coweringly down into her boots. It was at the thought of this terror that she now indulged a smile. One troubled one's self about such things when one was happy: it had become pitifully indifferent to her whether Deed lived in Colorado or Patagonia.

One of the pangs which reached Margaret from the outside during the first days of her misery was that which she felt when she learned that Philip was at last arrived in Maverick. She had heard, in a kind of dream, that there were fears for his safety; and, finally, that he was given up for lost; and it had seemed at the time only one of the thousand

sides there appear to be to even physical pains. Now that she had come out of the stupor of suffering which had followed Deed's going, and began to be sensible to exterior measures of her trouble, she was surprised to find a fleeting wretchedness in the knowledge that Philip lived, and that his father, who must have been down into the bitterest depths of grief for his imagined loss, rejoiced without her. For a moment she thought of Deed with untroubled tenderness. The other feeling followed, but the loving impulse taught her freshly the unbearable reach of her loss. It went too far. It cut too deep.

Vertner met the snow-bound party at the station. He usually went to the trains when he was in town. Men he knew were often passing through on their way to Denver or to the mountain towns. They gave him the last word about the outlook at the newest mining camp; they kept him wise about the ups and downs of older places. When they would stay over night at Maverick he would often spend the evening at the hotel losing a little to them at poker, and getting on the inside as he said, of good things in mines and real estate. He brought Margaret word of the arrival of Philip.

"Mighty close shave those fellows had!" he said. "It

could n't be done once in a dozen times. I would n't back Charlie Cozzens to do it, and he knows every foot of the Pass as if it were his Addition." The retired stage-driver's investment in Maverick real estate was known as "Cozzens's Addition." "But they are badly done up after it. The young lady went to bed."

"Young lady! Ned!" exclaimed Beatrice.

"Certainly! Young lady. Young lady and father, in fact. Maiden slender, fair, good looking—very. Father a clergyman; large, clever, manners until you can't rest: not here purely as a sanitary measure. The young lady really bore it pretty well. You can see that she was prettier three days ago, but she will pick up her prettiness again at the Centropolis House."

"A clergyman, Ned!"

"Well, not too much of a clergyman—not the kind that would worry the clerical Inspector of Weights and Measures with overweight. A good, practical, every-day, earthly Christian, with a soul away above the unrighteous nickel,—shaped to nobler ends, like thousand dollar bills: could make arrangements with soul to overlook some things. Good fellow! I took a kind of shine to him."

It was one of Ned Vertner's own sayings that he was a composite. He would not have been anything but the "rustler" he was,—dependent on the friendliness of fortune to this month's scheme for his next month's house rent—on any account; but he liked to remember how easily and naturally he might once have been the conventional gentleman whom he hated.

The Vertners had memories of the revolutionary hero with an honest grandfather, and the three succeeding generations of Unitarian ministers which makes a good family in Berkshire. There were no better than they in their village; and though Ned Vertner, before he was sixteen, disliked the people his family knew in Boston, as he disliked the propriety of the white picket fence in front of their white frame house with green blinds, it was a gratification to him at times to recall that the good social form of his family had existed for him to refuse. He went to Chili instead of to Harvard at seventeen, and remained there three years, helping a little to build the railway which his party went out to build; and learning to live hard, to drink hard, and to gamble more than he could afford.

It was in his third year—when he was coming down with

a fever which went near to finishing him—that Philip Deed joined the party. Philip would have said to anyone who had challenged his liking for Ned Vertner, that he liked him because he had contributed what effect there might be in three months' nursing to saving his life. At all events when Vertner was well enough to sail for home they parted in the relation of good comradeship often existing in new countries between men who are of no spiritual kindred.

It was Deed who, at Philip's suggestion, put Vertner in the way of coming West when he had found Berkshire more impossible than he had left it; and it was Deed whose professional relations to various adventurous enterprises opened the way to Vertner's first "scheme," and showed him his natural calling.

The impartial spectator would scarcely have supposed it a calling justifying marriage; but in Colorado rustling has the recognition of one of the liberal professions, and when Vertner had been engaged in it a year he worked a pass as far as Chicago through a friend, and returned from Boston, ten days later, married. It was an incredible marriage; it was the one thing, Philip told him, when he met

Beatrice, that he should never forgive him for. Vertner admitted that he was ashamed of himself; no one was more conscious than he that he was an undeservedly lucky dog.

"But what could I do?" he would say. "I told her it was a shame and a fraud; I gave her a full *résumé* of my worthlessness; I told her that if I had ever been good for anything I'd got over it; I told her that my doings out here would turn a Public Gardens swan red with pure shock, and would keep her conscience working on horse-car drivers' hours every day. She said she liked it. Then I went for the country, and gave this section down the banks. I told her that she would have to breakfast on climate and dine on scenery; that in this altitude it takes ten minutes to boil an egg soft, and that they put on beets the day before; that chickens can't live, and cow's milk is twelve cents a quart; that pneumonia rides around on a mowing machine; that she would n't find a library in Maverick, that the church was closed and the lecture bureau in the dry dock, and that you could take up all the civilization in the place on a fork. She said that none of these things mattered, and that something else did. I gave her up."

"Hush, Ned!" she was saying now, in response to his

profession of liking for Maurice. "Perhaps we can get him to stay with us here for next Sunday. It is months since we had a service. An Episcopal clergyman did you say?"

Vertner nodded, as he cut a little more steak for himself (they were at their one o'clock dinner). "I did n't say; but that's his rating. Don't count me in, though, Trix, on any scheme for supplying the pulpit of St. John's in the Wilderness. You remember I took a hand in the last Gospel boom in Maverick. Invite him here, if you like, and get him to preach for you next Sunday. I've no objection, and he won't kick if you make it worth his while. But leave me out. I would n't undertake the contract of furnishing a clergyman to that congregation again for a commission of fifty per cent. on his salary. If I knew a recipe for a durable angel-wash it would be a different thing: I should know where to look for a market, though the angel-market rules rather low in Maverick. At $700 a year it might n't be worth my while to put on more than one coat."

"Shame, Ned! Stop it!"

Vertner laughed with enjoyment. Margaret, who had found no way of taking Vertner in the month she had spent in the house with him, was silent. She was thinking of

Philip, and wondering how to frame a question which should inform her about him without seeming to seek the information.

Beatrice saved her the need. "We might go and call on Miss Maurice at the hotel," she said, doubtfully, looking toward Margaret. "That would commit us to nothing. We could see Mr. Maurice and judge for ourselves. Do you think she would see us, Ned?"

"Why she was going to bed, when I saw her, to stay until she was rested. But she would see St. John's in the Wilderness on her father's account, I should think, if you made it plain who you were. Write under your name on your card: 'Mrs. Vertner—representing St. John's in the Wilderness.' You'll get the consideration of a commercial man travelling for a big house."

Beatrice did not smile, but looked at Margaret questioningly. "I think she might be willing to see us," Margaret answered to Beatrice's enquiring look. "After such an experience she might be glad of the sight of friendly faces, even if they were strange."

They found this to be true when they went next day. They both made friends at once with Dorothy, who was sitting up, and who told the story of what had befallen them in the

mountains, gaining for the first time, in seeing its effect upon her hearers, a sense of the danger through which she had passed. She did not need a reminder to make her shudder at the journey through the storm; but the time in the cave had not seemed unhappy. She had not felt that they were in danger—perhaps she had not been allowed to feel it. It occurred to her now to wonder what might have happened if the storm had not ceased the morning after they had taken refuge there; if the wind had not fallen, the snow had not begun to melt; and a party of miners, on their way from Bayles' Park, had not found them on the second day, weak and exhausted of course, but able to ride to Bayles' Park where they took the train.

It was the hope of seeing Philip that had helped Margaret to come out for the first time since the day that was to have been her wedding day. The event had left her spiritually sore: she could not bear to see anyone, much less listen to the questions which must be asked if she went out. Yet there was nothing she liked so little as what she called, in her plain speech, "dodging": it seemed cowardly not to take the world as it came; and she was glad of a strong reason for going out. She wanted to see Philip, whom she

did not know: it would be the next thing to seeing his father. But it seemed that Philip had left Maverick within a few hours of his arrival. Philip, in fact, had taken the evening train the night before for Leadville, leaving Cutter to go on to Denver, where he had friends who might find something for him to do in connection with the smelting works there. Margaret knew that he must have gone to see his father at Leadville, and she flushed as she thought of one of the probable subjects of conversation between them.

CHAPTER VI

As Philip asked for his father at the hotel which Deed was accustomed to make his home during his frequent visits to Leadville, it was in his heart to wish that he had not always been the unsatisfactory son. The day before he might have wished it in a spasm of contrition for the necessity of asking his father for more money; but he was wishing it now because the things they were saying about Deed at Maverick pained and angered him; he was sure his father was in trouble, and he had come up to Leadville with an impulsive desire to help him if he might. He had telegraphed him from Bayles' Park of their safety, and from Maverick, as soon as the rumours reached him, that he was coming up to Leadville.

He wanted to help his father in the trouble he merely guessed—he had not stayed to hear the story—; but to speak

to him as he would like to speak, their relation should be more equal: it ought to depend less for its harmony on his father's forbearance. He wished heartily that he had never done anything in particular; or, lacking that, that his failures had cost his father less. In these moods he always denounced his failures to himself as the result of crude and silly experiments which he should have known enough to avoid; but when he was so sensible as this he was usually a little more sensible, and perceived that the whole fruitless drama of his life, thus far, was inevitable—a fellow like him, he supposed, had to make an appointed degree of fool of himself.

In this light the restless longing of his boyhood to possess himself, to lay hands on the charter of his life on his own account; his refusal to please his father by going to Columbia; the unquiet wish for a different, a freer life, another set of conditions—say a man's—; his aimless and resultless year in Chili as a civil engineer, his six months of orange-growing in Florida, his other six months, in which he saw a fortune in evaporating peaches in the Southern States—it was the fortune which had evaporated—and this last empty-headed folly at Piñon seemed foolish, indeed, but necessary, like the stages of a disease. He always said to himself in these

contemptuous reflections on his doings that he knew better now; had learned a lesson. And this was in so far true that he seldom made the same kind of fool of himself twice.

He was thinking how glad he should be to see his father again, as he followed the bell boy out of the crowded hotel office along the creaking hallways, and up the swaying stairs (the hotel had been built of unseasoned timber, when saw-mills were fifty miles away, and money was worth four per cent. a month, and the structure began to fall apart); and was adding to himself that since it was in his blood to do undesirable things, it was trebly undesirable that they should be destined to be the disappointment and trouble of so good a fellow as his father. He treated him so handsomely, always, that his disappointment was seldom in evidence; but Philip knew that it existed, and knew—he recalled the fact now with a bitter smile—that it had been left for Jasper to realize his father's ideals.

Jasper had been a cautious and conservative investor at ten; a patient, thorough-going man of business at seventeen. He sold foreign stamps at school while he was in the First Reader, and drove hard bargains in decalcomanie and marbles before he knew his Latin paradigms. He was

eight when it occurred to him that he might as well turn a penny by serving the morning paper to his father, and the gentlemen whom he knew on the block (it was in New York), as to let the regular carrier earn it. He rose at five o'clock in the morning to look after his papers, and he had been getting up early ever since.

Philip never got up early unless to go hunting, or birds' nesting, or fishing, or to catch the train at the end of the term when he came home from boarding school. He was glad to be going home then, and did n't mind: it was always a happiness to see his father again. He was not merely his father, but a kind of a hero to him. Jasper often got home rather later; there were trades to be settled with the boys at school. As the elder brother (he used his advantage of a year for all it was worth) he was properly reserved in his feeling about the home-coming. And when the time came Jasper went into business, liked it, stuck to it, succeeded in it; and then took charge of the ranch and made a success of that.

Jasper had known what he wanted to do from the beginning; and was entirely capable of doing it. Philip had known clearly only what he did not want to do; and

thus far he had not done much. It was this that made him hesitate as he came to the door of his father's room. He wished again that he could feel that he stood near his father: that the invariable kindness which he remembered in him from boyhood had nothing to forgive in him; that he had not disappointed him.

But he turned the knob and went in. His father was sitting under the ineffective light of a huge bronze chandelier, wound about with a brambly wreath of gilt, absorbed in work upon a heap of legal documents scattered over the table, and did not hear Philip's entrance. When his son touched him on the shoulder, he turned hastily, and for a moment did not perceive who it was. When he saw he rose hastily, stretching both hands out to him. "Why, Phil! Phil!" he cried, and stopped, choking and not knowing how to go on. "I—the fact is—I thought we should n't be seeing you—should n't—. Oh, Phil," he broke off, dashing his hands to his eyes, "what luck—what blessed luck! I had given you up. I—find a seat, will you?"

Deed sat down hastily and buried himself in his papers. His lip shook.

Philip found a seat on the bed. He was himself much agitated. He had not counted on this at all. He had allowed for his father's anxiety; and had telegraphed him as soon as they reached Bayles' Park; but that he would think him lost in the storm was outside all his thoughts. Yet no one knew better how near they had all actually been to death in the snow. "Dear father!" he said to himself, as he watched him making his poor feint of going on with his work. "It's awfully good of him to care!"

Deed glanced up at him once, venturing a smile; and looked down again forthwith. When he was done with the last practicable pretence, he folded his papers slowly. Philip had never seen him so careful about adjusting them.

He rose at last, clapping the bundled documents on the table briskly, and came over to where Philip was sitting on the bed. Deed dropped down beside him, laying his arm lightly about his shoulders.

"Well, boy, how goes it?"

Philip dropped his eyes. "Why, that was what I came up to ask you, father. How does it go?"

A spark lighted in Deed's eye. He drew in his breath

sharply. He came back and stood before Philip after a nervous turn across the floor.

"Phil!"

"Father!"

"You got my wire at Laughing Valley?"

Philip nodded. His father regarded him for a moment in pained question of his face. He thought he read his condemnation in it.

"Say it, Phil! Say it!" he cried hoarsely. "Don't sit there dumb! I know what you think. You're right. I sold you out. I signed away your rights. I did you out of your future with a foolish, amiable stroke of the pen. I trusted a scoundrel, and you've to pay for it. I wanted to do the handsome thing by Jasper, and I did it—at your expense. It's been your treat, all along, Phil," he said, with a miserable smile, "though you did n't know it."

Philip leaped up. "Great heaven, father, you have n't been thinking that I was shouting around about my miserable little share in that business. Surely you don't think that I could name it beside your trouble, much less be fooling with the poor question of blame. I should think Jasper was enough to blame for half-a-dozen."

His father smiled sadly. "What Jasper has done can't excuse me. He could n't have done it if I had n't thrown the way open to him. If I had n't trusted him—"

"And you expect me to accuse you of having trusted him? Would n't a father trust his own son, I should like to know? Is it a thing he must answer for?"

"My God, Phil, has n't he answered for it, is n't he answering for it, will he ever get to the end of answering for it?" He covered his eyes.

"I know, father," said Philip, taking a turn across the room. "Ingratitude is like that. It hurts—it keeps on hurting."

"Yes," owned Deed grimly; "it hurts."

"Surely it's enough then. Pray don't bother about me. You would have done it for me in the same situation. Do you think I don't know that, or that I don't know that I never gave you the chance? I 've not been doing the approved thing. I never have. When I do it will be time enough for me to trot out a grievance."

"Oh, Phil, I 've not been fair to you." It was the expression of his sense of his whole course toward him from boyhood; but Philip took it to refer to the contract.

"Pshaw, father, I shall rub along for the few years left of the partnership. What difference can it make? I shall be all the better for having to make my own way for a while."

"Few years?" exclaimed his father.

"The partnership—it's five years, is n't it?" said Philip, dropping on the bed again, and curling his legs up comfortably. "You won't mind my smoking?" he asked, producing a cigarette.

His father did not speak, as he drew a match across his boot. "You have n't given Jasper anything. I could understand your feeling that unfair. He has nothing permanently that is mine. At worst you've lost me nothing, father—merely postponed it. It's only five years, and if it were ten or fifteen, it's not your act. It's Jasper's. Don't talk of my loss. There is none. And if there were, what would it be to yours? I could only lose money by him. I'm—well, I'm not his father. I have n't protected him, and worked for him, and kept him from every sort of harm, and done all I knew for him since he was a child. I never gave him a father's love and trust to wound me with!"

Deed groaned. "Oh, stop it, Phil! Stop it! You make it impossible to tell you." He rose and wandered about the room aimlessly, picking up the rose-flushed vases on the mantel and studying their red and gilt flowers, turning up the gas and leaving it hissing, detaching the loop that caught back the window curtain, and returning it to its bracket again. Philip watched him wonderingly. His cigarette went out.

"Oh, come father!" he said at last, smiling. "One would think you had been putting up some infernal job on me."

His father looked up, eyeing him haggardly. "You 've said it."

"Said what, father? I don't understand."

Deed paused with the poker in his hand to say over his shoulder, as he stooped to the fire, "They did n't tell you at Maverick, then?"

"I gathered you were in your trouble. I heard that your marriage was postponed. I thought you would rather tell me?"

"Oh, so I would! So I would!" exclaimed his father absently, as he turned from the fire. He looked remorsefully

into the eyes that met his. "Why did n't somebody tell you!" he cried. Philip made a place for him by his side as he came meditatively toward him, with his head down. Deed guessed the grease spot on the carpet, clouding one of the fruit-bearing boys in their ovals, to be kerosene, as he paused a moment in study of it.

He had decided it was champagne, as he looked up and faced his son again.

His voice melted. "How the deuce am I going to tell you, Phil?"

"What's the use, father?"

"Oh, use!" exclaimed Deed impatiently. He tapped his foot above the curly head of one of the dove-coloured boys. "You've got to know. Pshaw! Why did n't some one tell you!" He strode away to the other corner of the room, snapping his fingers noiselessly.

"Tell me, father——" began Philip.

"You won't believe it! She did n't." He breathed a heavy sigh. "I suppose it is n't very credible," he said, staring into the air. "I don't understand it myself all the time."

"But——"

"It's infamous, I tell you. You don't want me to tell it. Better go hear it from the gossips, Phil. I supposed they knew about it by this time—I trusted to your having heard it from them. They will know what to think about it. I don't. I think it magnificently right one minute, and the other thing the next. It's cost me enough to be right: it's cost everyone else enough to be wrong."

"Tell me, father," insisted Philip, "what coil has Jasper got you into?"

"Ah, now you have it, Phil! That's something like! Stick to that! That's what I say to myself when I've accused myself black and blue. I say it was Jasper. It *was* Jasper; and it was Adam, too, in the same way. Things have got to have a beginning. It would be a poor sin that had n't some sort of provocation to its back."

"You forget who you're talking to, father. You don't think you can make me believe you have done anything wrong."

"I don't know what I can make you believe. Suppose, Phil, you are fool enough to trust a man to wear a diamond. He is n't only wearing your diamond, you see, but your trust. One day he simplifies things by pocketing the stone. In a wrestle for it, you snatch it from him and throw it into the

river. You are not strong enough to get it back for yourself and keep it: only just strong enough to keep it from him by losing it yourself. You see how you could n't let him have it, don't you, Phil?"

"Yes, I see," said Philip thoughtfully.

"It's not the stone, you know."

Philip stroked his moustache thoughtfully. "No, it is n't the stone."

"You could bear that. The other you can't. I've sold the range for $25,000," he said abruptly.

Philip started. "But it was worth $150,000."

"Yes," said his father, drily, "that's the point."

Philip stared at him. "And what does Jasper say?" he asked in a voice which he seemed to hear speaking in the tones of some one else from a distance.

His father glanced up at him doubtfully. He caught his hands behind his big head as he crossed his legs and threw himself back in the deep sleepy-hollow chair. "Jasper? Why, that's just the pity of it. We have n't heard what Jasper thinks. It's too bad, because that's where all the fun comes in—what he thinks. The fun has been rather slow so far in other quarters."

"Do you mean that you have ruined yourself to even things up with Jasper?" demanded his son, making no answer.

Deed glanced at his nails. "I should n't put it that way," he said huskily; "but that's what it comes to."

"And Miss Derwenter—Mrs. Deed, my mother who is to be!"

His father looked steadily into his eyes a moment. "I meant to ruin her, too, but she objected."

"And that is what——?"

"What parted us. Yes," said his father.

Philip turned suddenly upon his heel and strode away to the window, brushing aside the lace curtains and vanishing within the embrasure. The street was alight with the night gaiety of Leadville. He bent an unseeing eye on the spectacle.

As his father gazed after him a look of desolation settled on his face. The lightness he had forced fell away from him and he fixed a glance upon the spot where his son had disappeared—bitter, doubting, wistful.

He saw suddenly how the self-accusations of his loneliness

—the miserable loneliness which had overtaken him since he had broken with Margaret—had instinctively looked to Philip for contradiction all along: how he had relied on Philip's comprehension. At his lowest he had said to himself that Philip, cruelly injured as he was by his act, must see how he had come to do it—must recognize its inevitableness. Jasper had always had his admiration, his approval: Philip was right about that. But he had always understood Philip better. He was more like himself. And now he trusted him to understand him—to make allowances for a thing which he had known quite well, even in his passion, must need some allowance from anybody, and would never be understood at all by more than one or two. One of these he had supposed confidently would be Margaret. To repeat his disappointment in her with Philip would be merely killing: he could not bear it. Why, he began to ask himself, had he done this thing?

"Oh, come out of that, Philip!" he cried, at last, in an irresistible burst of impatience. "Come out, and say what you've got to say. I can stand it, I guess."

Philip obeyed slowly. He paused just outside the curtains, fastening his eyes on the floor.

"There's nothing to say, father. You've done it, have n't you?"

"Do you wish I had n't?" asked his father quickly.

"Why, it's hardly my part, is it, father, to question what you do?"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed his father, contemptuously. "I'm not asking for criticism. I ask about your feelings. You know about them, I suppose. You understand, I dare say, how it feels to lose $50,000?"

Poor Deed! Why should the wrong which he was conscious of having done Philip and Margaret, make him hard toward both of them, where he most wished to be gentle?

Philip winced, but controlled himself to say, "What has my feeling to do with it, father? It's the thing itself that matters, is n't it?"

"You mean on high moral grounds?" asked Deed, the colour rising in his face threateningly. Philip knew the approaches of one of his father's bursts of passion too well to feel guiltless in provoking one of them, however remotely.

"Do you want me to say I like it, father? I don't. But

would my liking better it? Surely you see, father, that the thing is wrong in itself."

"Oh, I don't know what I see," cried Deed, gnawing at his bristly moustache as he paced the floor. "I know it seemed the only right thing there was when I did it. I know I had to do it. That's my safest ground, perhaps I had to do it. Good God, Phil! you see that! You would n't have had me leave him with his plunder?" He sat down, and instantly leaped up again. Philip wandered restlessly about. "I have n't it, it's true; but he has n't. It's cost the whole subject of dispute to beat him; but I *have* beaten him. I have rounded on his devilish falsity. And I would do it again. Yes, rather than have to think that he had done such a thing and prospered in it, I would do it twice over. Why, Phil, I 've beaten him! Could I pay too much for that?"

Philip bit his lip. "Why, since you ask me, father, I'm bound to say that I think you could. I think you have. His being a blackguard does n't help it. It makes it worse."

Deed's face darkened. "You mean that *you* have paid too much. You mean that I let you in for enough in making you pay for my whim of pleasing Jasper without

making you pay for my squaring of accounts with him?"

"No," said Philip, looking in his father's face, "I don't mean that. They are my accounts, too. It's against me that Jasper has done this as much as against you. Heaven knows," he said, as his face darkened, and he doubled his fist under his sleeve, "I'd be glad to square my account with Jasper. If there is going to be a settlement I'm ready to pay my share. But, father, there must n't be a squaring of accounts on this basis. The thing's wrong, it's indefensible, it's impossible."

Deed drove his clenched hand into his open palm. "Impossible? For whom? For you? For Margaret?" he demanded. "Or perhaps you mean for Jasper?" he asked, mockingly.

"I do mean for Jasper. It's a wrong to him."

"A wrong to Jasper!" cried Deed in scornful amusement, kicking a chair out of his path as he walked back and forth. "T—s—s—s!"

"See here, father, I've no love for Jasper. You must know that. But I can't be part of a scheme for burking him like this."

"Burking him?"

"Well, selling him out, wiping out his share while he's away. You don't want me to help you do a wrong like that to yourself, father?"

"Did I ask for your help?" inquired Deed, in a tone of offence.

Philip flushed. "Why, I should have said that you had used it."

"In wiping out *your* share?" said his father with threatening calmness. "Do you object to that?"

"I suppose I must say that I object to the purpose you are wiping it out for. Why, father, you see it yourself. You 've as much as owned it. The thing's not fair!"

Deed's mouth fell. He stared at him in an amazement that gave way to a look of inexpressible grief, as he came and stood before Philip and laid a doubting hand on his shoulder. "Phil! *Phil!*" he cried, miserably interrogating the eyes which his son let fall. "*You're* not going back on me?"

"Going back on you, father?" Philip snatched the hand hanging by his side. "I'm trying to save you. You're letting yourself in for a life time of remorse. You'll kick

yourself for this thing before you are a week older. Think, father! Can you afford to do a wrong like this to Jasper?"

His father gave an inarticulate grunt of contempt, and bit his lip as if he feared what he might be tempted to say. It had been in his mind to tell him that he had done his best to buy his word back about the range, in order to keep his word with Margaret, and that he had had his trouble for his pains. But he would not give him so much satisfaction, now. It had not been done for Jasper's sake, at all events, he said to himself scornfully.

"Drop it, Phil!" he said suddenly, at last. "This isn't a safe subject between us. I know what I've done. I've never had a doubt—not one single moment's doubt, mind you—about this as far as Jasper is concerned. He's done me the cruellest wrong that a son can do a father. Do you think it's a time to be nice about what I do to him?"

"Why, father, is n't it the time of times? If he had never wronged you, one might afford a luxury like that. One can do it with best friends. But to do an indefensible thing —you own that, father: it *is* indefensible—and to choose Jasper for the object of it!—you see, yourself, it won't work. When you put him in the right by putting yourself in the

wrong with him you're simply taking a permanent lease of torment! There's no end to the mess, this way! Don't you see it? Aggression of some sort becomes his right. It will be almost a virtue in him. Where will there ever be an end to it? It will make you unhappy, father. That is what I'm thinking of. And the unhappiest part of the whole business will be when you see that, after all, it *was n't* fair."

"Fair!" cried his father hoarsely. "Fair! Oh, the devil!" He sat down clenching his hands. The blood rose in his face.

"Did you wish to be unfair?"

"Yes!" shouted Deed. "Yes! I wished to be all that you imply! I wished to be unfair to both of you!"

"Both of us!" exclaimed Philip, turning pale.

"Oh, I know what you think! I wished to be unfair to Jasper, and to do it I must be doubly unfair to you, and I did n't care. You don't say it. You talk of Jasper."

"Father, can you think—?"

"Yes—more than you say."

Philip grew white about the nostrils. "I have said all that I mean. I say it's shabby to freeze Jasper out in his absence. I say that you are free to use whatever share I may

claim in the range as you like. But not for that. I won't be a party to it. I won't stand by and see you do such a wrong to yourself."

"Say what you mean!" cried his father with an implication in his voice which maddened Philip beyond control.

"Father!" he cried warningly.

Deed thrust his hands into his pockets, and facing him with deliberate bitterness, looked into his eyes. "I will pay you every penny of your damned fifty thousand dollars before you are twenty-four hours older."

For a moment Philip stared at his father in speechless anger. Then with a cry of rage he burst from the room.

CHAPTER VII

The clerk in the office spared a single gleam of the eye which was busy challenging the new-comers by the evening express from Denver,—looking them into the earth and pardoning them into existence again long enough to send them aloft in the care of "Front,"—to observe Philip's quick push through the office. The crowd parted before his blind look and determined arm, and in a moment he was in the air, reeling up the street, with his veins aflame and his tongue hot upon his lips.

His anger bore him on through the mob that commonly fills the sidewalk to its edge at night in Leadville. They gave way before his white face and set look. He did not know where he was going until a sharp ascent on the outskirts of the town took his breath in the manner of lesser elevations at the altitude of Leadville. He paused on the

summit and, snatching off his hat, bared his moist forehead and beating head.

The sweet, strong, uplifting keenness of the mountain air swept through his brain. He pushed back the thick hair about his brow and stared up at the stars, shining down upon him through an atmosphere fined to an ethereal rarity. The intolerable exaltation of the air played upon his fevered spirit.

Standing there, he said to himself that he could never forgive his father: the affront was too deep, the misconception too gross. That he should think him capable of such meanness; that he should be ready on the suggestion of an instant to class him with Jasper; above all that he should asperse him with the thought that he could use a pretended impulse of fairness to a man who had done him a wrong—an impulse of generosity if one liked (standing out there in the air Philip said to himself that, after all, it was generous) to cloak a low appeal for himself,—it was too much! It was not what any man could be expected to forgive another. He repeated to himself often that he did not care that he was his father. No human relationship could give a man the right to insult another like that.

And then, in a moment, he laughed at the boyish self-

assertion; and could have wept for his father. The air was really too tense: he could not think in it.

He recalled inconsequently that he had meant to ask his father to lend him $400. The recollection was a fresh pain. It seemed to him that his father could not have suspected him in just that way, if he had not given him good cause to know that he was always in want of money—that the whole question of money ruled him, at times, in a way which he could not, himself, reconcile with better things in his nature. No wonder his father had thought his urgency interested. Had he ever shown himself disinterested where money was involved?

As he went back through the town he thought he would go straight to his father and make it right with him. But the low instinct of pride which Philip was disposed in heated moments to take for the noblest thing in himself withheld him. He could not do it. Finally, perhaps he would do it—indeed, the subtle second consciousness knew very well that in the end he must do it, for he could not live unreconciled to his father: the amiable need, mixed of generosity and selfishness, to live at one with those nearest him would force him to it at last; and he knew that he could never let

his father make the advance : that would be too shameful—yet he must refuse himself the happiness of going to bed with it righted.

He knew for a folly the honour that he did the shallow conceit of dignity, in waiting ; but he could not get himself into the door of the hotel and up the stairs to his father's room when the time came. He crossed over to the other side of the street when he reached the hotel ; and then he saw that his father's light was out. He told himself, now, that he had probably meant to do it to-night, after all ; that he had been postponing it until he should have had a glass of something at Pop Wyman's to clear his head ; and he believed that he was sorry his father had gone to bed. But when he found him playing at the faro table where he paused for a moment, after his glass at the bar, he sheered away hastily, avoiding his eye ; and went unhappily down Chestnut Street, plunging into the first dance hall he passed, and suffering one of the "beer jerkers" to wheedle him into treating her to a mint julep. She said she never took anything but mint juleps. He saw again remorsefully the look on his father's face as he bent over the faro table (he was losing heavily) while he chaffed the girl vaguely, from some

exterior nimbus of intelligence, on her fad for mint juleps. When she would have dragged him upon the floor, however, to join the quadrille that was forming, he broke away without ceremony and made for the door.

The miners in their blue shirts and brown, copper-riveted trousers stuck in their boots, and with their armories belted around their waists, beat time to the music which was just beginning in the hot and reeking hall, dimly lighted by kerosene lamps. One of them shouted after him by name to come back. Philip recognized the speaker for a man he had known at Piñon, as he turned for a moment at the door. It was young Hafferton, the tutor who had given up his post at Dartmouth to come West for consumption, and, recovering, had not yet found enough money to get back with. He had been the single reporter of the daily paper at Piñon. He had a long nose and a thin straggling beard and wore glasses. Philip supposed he was working the mine he used to talk to him about taking with half a dozen other impecunious young men of his own sort, on a lease.

"Oh! hello, Hafferton!" he said in listless recognition. He went back for a moment to shake hands with him over the rail dividing the dancing floor from the drinking bar.

Hafferton told him, that, as he had supposed, he was working the "Come to me Quickly," on a lease. They were hiring no labour; but putting in their own. They had found good pay dirt he said, and were doing well. He hoped to start for home in the Spring, and to have a little left when he got back to keep him going until he could find something to do again. He was tired of mining. He had given up all the brave hopes with which he had begun. He was content to take a fair day's wages out of their leased claim day by day, if he might.

"I suppose we shall think of this as a stereopticon view we've seen, rather than as a real experience a year or two hence, when we're back East," said Hafferton, glancing about the dingy room. "But we must take what fun's moving. 'Everything goes in Colorado,'" he said, repeating the current slang phrase.

Philip refused the inclusion of himself in this point of view with a glance which should have explained to Hafferton what an ass he was. But Hafferton went on, undisquieted.

"You're down on your ranch, now, I suppose?" Philip's plans for leaving Piñon had been known before Hafferton left for Leadville.

"I've no ranch!" growled Philip, ungraciously.

"Why, but I thought——" began Hafferton, doubtfully, beginning to feel the distance in Philip's manner.

"I know you did. So did I."

"Somebody jumped your claim?"

Philip surveyed him for a moment, wondering if he could have heard anything. "No," said he, truculently, as if Hafferton was likely to dispute it, "I sold it."

"Oh!" exclaimed Hafferton. He had a chirpy manner, and a polite little voice which twisted every nerve in Philip. "I hope you got a good price for it."

"Yes," said Philip, ambiguously, "I got my price."

Hafferton glanced at him uncertainly. "I think they're waiting for me," he said, glancing behind him, where the three sets on the floor were making the preliminary bows to their partners. His own young lady was beckoning to him. "So long!" he said, waving his hand lightly as he disappeared.

At the theatre across the way Philip made out, through the cloud of tobacco smoke hovering between him and the stage, an elderly woman in a ball dress, the skirt of which reached to her knees. She was describing to the audience

from the footlights in song how she met her "Harry" on Carbonate Hill every pleasant afternoon at the change of shifts. The burden of the matter was that Harry was "such a *nice* young man!" Philip found himself waiting for the wriggle by which the cracked voice attacked this phrase, at the end of each stanza; and came to wonder dully, as she would begin the amorous tale afresh, how she was going to manage to connect the sense of this stanza at the end with her central truth, while the thought went buzzing in his head, "He means to raise that money to-morrow. How?"

The epithets which he would use against himself on ordinary occasions of remorse did not enough blacken his act. How could he have allowed the talk with his father, which he had meant should console him with the knowledge that he, at least, remained faithful to him, to issue in an estrangement between them, and in this miserable resolve of his father's to pay him a foolish debt of pride? His father had been trying. Oh, of course! But might he not have guessed that he must be trying? He knew his temper. Knowing the fine, the good, the generous man behind it, had he ever cared for that before? And remembering the trial through which he had just passed, recalling that

he had found him still trembling from the hurt that Jasper had dealt him, should he not have forborne; should he not, at all events and at all costs, have avoided losing his second son to him? But what he had implied was intolerable: he turned hot at thought of it. Yet if to be imagined so base was maddening, what must it not be to his father to think him so? He rose with the determination to hunt up his father and make him know his thought before he slept. They could settle the Jasper question another time. Just now his only anxiety was for reconciliation.

He refused the return check offered him by the frowsy being who guarded the exit to the theatre. The assurance that Harry was "such a *nice* young man" followed him, with a dying quaver and simper into the street.

On the sidewalk he encountered Vertner. It appeared that he had come up to Leadville from Maverick to see Deed about a mine they were interested in together—to speak accurately, a mine which Vertner had induced Deed to join him in purchasing. The mine was filling with water, and it was a question between putting in expensive machinery to pump it out, and abandoning it. Vertner had in his pocket an assay of the vein they were working.

"Your father says we can't afford to go on with it: says *he* has n't got any money (I believe him, for he was just trying to borrow $25,000 when I struck him); but I say we can't afford to give it up. Taber might: we can't. It's a chance in a lifetime. With dirt like that in sight it's only the rich who can afford to economise. You don't happen to have $10,000 in your clothes, do you?"

"No," said Philip, "I was just going to ask you if you knew where I could borrow $50,000."

Vertner stopped short (they were walking together toward Harrison Avenue), taking Philip unceremoniously by the arm. "See here! Put me on to this thing! What are you and your father up to? Is there a dollar in it?"

"Are n't you in schemes enough, Vertner?" he asked to turn the subject.

"No, my boy. There are not schemes enough in the cosmos for the energy I feel in myself when I get up any of these fine mornings. And the mints don't manufacture the money that I feel I could use. What's the use of living if you have n't a new idea for the new day, as it comes along? These fellows that get an idea when they are eighteen,

and spread it thin over the rest of their lives, to make it last, give me a pain. Come! Whisper it to your uncle! What are you up to—you and your father?"

"Oh, drop it, Vertner!" cried Philip wearily.

Vertner's quick ear caught the accent of pain in his voice. "Oh, well, *now* you've *got* to tell me, or own up that you won't let a fellow help you. The scheme is dropped with pleasure. I'm starting a popular subscription that's worth two of it. I call it 'Vertner's Grand Popular Subscription for the Presentation to Philip Deed, Esq., of a Nickel Plated Derrick to be employed in elevating him from some Confounded Muss.'" He wrote the words on the air with a fluent hand as they walked up Harrison Avenue toward the hotel. The crowd had begun to disperse: the shops were dark, and the gambling houses cast the only light, save that of the electric lamps, upon the street from behind their glass fronts. "There's going to be one subscriber to my fund—just one. If you want $50,000 you've got to have it, and I'm going to get it for you."

"It's deuced white of you, Vertner," said Philip with gloomy gratitude; "but you can't do it. I want it to-morrow." He threw away his cigarette and began rolling another.

"Try something possible. Prevent my father from borrowing $25,000. It will do me the same service."

"Oh, come! I call for a show-down!" cried Vertner. "*I* don't know what you are driving at."

"My father has a crazy notion of paying me $50,000 to-morrow. Other men would threaten it. He will do it. He fancies—he thinks—" Philip gulped down the lump in his throat. "He has an idea that I am kicking about that business with Jasper. You know about that?"

"No," said Vertner, a quickening glance of curiosity passing over his shrewd face, "I don't. What was it?"

Philip told him fully, as they paused under an electric lamp, whose knife-edge glare showed them each other's faces and would have tempted an observer to note the contrast between them—to remark how Philip's sinewy bulk made more than its impression by the side of Vertner's slight, wiry build, thin, alert little face, and medium stature; and how Vertner, who, in his own way, was as sufficient as the driving-wheel of an engine, took an aspect of ineffectiveness from the power expressing itself in every line of Philip's frame.

The deceptive outward look of ineffectiveness which was

accented by contrast with Philip was always what impressed those who met Vertner for the first time; and, (coupled with the still, sleepy gaze habitually dwelling in his eyes while he was engaged in the approaches to "talking business,") it had often encouraged men with whom he dealt in his early Colorado days, to trade on the unsophistication of an under-endowed young innocent. As Vertner said, with a twinkling eye, in the Western slang that often displaced the inadequacies of his Massachusetts English, "It was the kind of case where a man picks you up for a sucker, and lays you down for a shark."

To the casual eye Vertner looked about Philip's age, not because he was not seven years older, but because Philip's superior height and weight, his tanned cheek, heavy moustache, high-growing hair, the lips closed firmly on each other from habit, and a certain look of manly self-command in his quiet eyes, added five or six years to his twenty-three summers; while Vertner, who went always clean shaven, whose hair was fair and thin, whose smooth, clever, keen, good-humoured face had that incurable boyish look through all its shrewdness, which every one will remember in some man-boy he knows—Vertner, I say, pro-

cured a diminution of his thirty years by six or seven in the eyes of the casual observer. The observer, when he came to know him better, would have perceived the shrewd lines beginning to gather at the corners of his mouth. By this time he would have liked Vertner, or he might have gone on to add that it was a sophisticated, even a calculating mouth; and might have found something hard in those shrewd lines.

"Father imagines," concluded Philip, as they moved on—"something I said gave him the idea—that I feel myself swindled by what he did: selling Jasper out. You know my father. He does n't need facts for his anger; and what I said was easily misunderstood. It was in the nature of the thing. One word for Jasper looked like two for myself. It ended in his swearing that he would pay me my third share in the ranch within twenty-four hours. That was to-night. He has the $25,000 by him from the sale of the ranch. That's plain enough from his trying to borrow only $25,000. But he can no more raise $25,000 more by to-morrow, as things are with him, than you can, Vertner. He'll do it though. You know that. And he'll do it at a cost that he will pay for with every moment of his life afterward."

"Um. You would n't need the—the trifle you mention very long, would you?"

"Long enough to lend it to my father, take it from him and pay it back."

"You're not thinking of lending it to him yourself, I take it. There is to be somebody in between?"

"Certainly. I suppose it would n't be hard to find a man generous enough to lend father $25,000 of my money without security if I could get the $25,000."

They were at the door of a saloon. Philip said he had just been drinking and wanted nothing; but he went in with Vertner, who ordered vermouth and insisted on his taking something with him. Vertner had learned to drink vermouth in the fast set into which he had fallen at the preparatory school from which there had once been an intention of sending him to Harvard.

"No, no more," said Philip, shaking his head in answer to Vertner's urgence, after their one glass together.

"Well then, take my good advice," said Vertner, as they went out into the street together. "Take *something* with me. If I were in your shoes, I'd skip."

"Oh, no you would n't, Vertner. You'd know my father

if you'd lived in my shoes as long as I have, and you'd see the folly of it. He'll pay that money over to me just the same, you know, whether I am here to take it in person or not. It's not difficult to deposit a cheque to my credit at his bank, and notify me by wire. If I am going to attempt refusing it I can do it better by staying. The other way I should be helpless. If I stay, though I can't really refuse it, perhaps I can manage what will come to the same thing."

"Oh, all right!" exclaimed Vertner, good-naturedly abandoning the point. "Count on me!"

They walked Harrison Avenue for an hour or more, discussing plans for preventing Deed from borrowing the money. Philip could not have given a name to his fears. He merely knew that since his father had stripped himself of the ranch he could not lay hands at such notice on $25,000 of his own; and he knew no less well that somewhere, in some way, he would lay hands on it and would pay it over to him, if he would let him, next day, together with $25,000 more. He was haunted by a strange dread.

They went into one saloon and another. Philip was

restless. At several places they overheard talk about Deed. It was one o'clock and they had dropped into St. Anne's Rest, when Philip, as he put his glass to his lips (he was drinking too much and was conscious of it, but was incapable of stopping), heard a red-faced man standing next him at the bar, say, with an oath:—

"Just my luck! Deed and I are on this here Church Building Fund together: our committee subscribed the square thing, and now Deed'll shirk his share when the time comes, and the committee'll have to make up his subscription among themselves. I always said we ought to have subscribed it separately 'stid of as a committee, but Hank Jackson wanted to keep his subscription dark. He was n't ponying up as much as usual. Should n't wonder if he was going same way as Deed. 'Iron Silver' or 'Morning Star,' did you say?"

His companion, whose florid face was supported upon a bull neck, and whose moustache had been trained to wanton in a grandiose curve and to hang its spreading boughs within easy twirling distance of his collar, said that it was the "Iron Silver" he had spoken of.

"He *must* be hard up! Men in this town ain't putting

up 'Iron Silver' stock even when they want to borrow $25,000 pretty bad—not very brash!"

Philip had put down his glass. His muscles grew rigid. The impulse to seize the bull neck, and choke the man until he denied it was a mastering need; but he forbore. Perhaps the man spoke the truth. He turned pale, and pinched his eyes with his fingers and beat his head to clear his brain of the fumes of the liquor he had drunk. "Come!" he cried to Vertner, clutching his arm. Vertner stood still, listening. "Come!" he repeated hoarsely.

"You heard?" he said, when they were outside, in the cold, strong air.

"Yes. The thing's got to be stopped! I'm with you."

"Stopped!" exclaimed Philip. "Stopped! My God, man, do you know whose 'Iron Silver' shares those are?"

"Your father's."

"Humph! Listen!" He whispered in his ear.

Vertner started. Under the ghostly glare of the electric light, his face paled. He repeated Philip's word in the same whisper. He caught his arm vehemently, inquiringly.

Philip nodded. "Come!" he said.

"Where?"

"To the telegraph office."

"It's closed."

"They'll open it for a thing like this."

"What are you going to do?"

"*Do?* I'm going to get that money."

Vertner went with him.

CHAPTER VIII

Beatrice did not wholly respect her fancy that she occasionally saw a look of dogged repression or patient pain in Dr. Ernfield's eyes lately. She had fallen into the wifely habit of seeing things a little qualified by her husband's probable comments on her observations; and she knew that Vertner would make fun of her if she told him of this fancy. But the listless step, which had replaced the briskness prevailing through the worst of his former weakness, and the growing haggardness of his whole outward aspect were things which any one must see, she said to herself after a day or two. She wondered that Margaret, who saw so much of him, appeared to be blind to them; but then, Margaret *was* blind. For her part she resolved to say nothing. It was not her affair.

Fred Kelfner, his stable boy and factotum, the warmth of

whose affection for his employer was one of the jokes of the town, noticed the change at all events, immediately, and told at home that, "Doc. was growin' peak-ed agin, and losin' all he'd gained." Fred drove Ernfield about, and was frequently at the house. Beatrice and Margaret often exchanged a word with him: his loyal adoration of the doctor, taking no account of the derision it won him among boys of his own age, touched them.

"It don't make no difference to a feller what he does for a *brick!*" he had said at some intimation from Beatrice on one occasion that his fealty might lose him caste among the boys. He said it with the exaltation of a noble of King Henry's at Ivry, chanting,

"And be our oriflamme to-day, King Henry of Navarre!"

And Beatrice gladly abandoned him to the consequences of his faith to his liege.

His talk about Ernfield's health, reaching Beatrice at last through her kitchen, suffused her prophetic soul with a glow of confirmation not all pain. When it finally reached Margaret, through Beatrice, she took shame to herself for having leaned on him so much. She recognized that, in the week since

Deed's departure, she had fallen into a habit of dependence upon him for part of her daily support—a habit which she could not help seeing was growing upon her. A perception of the way in which others must have leaned on his generous strength, if she, so entirely accustomed to stand alone, could fall in a few days into the habit, overwhelmed her at the same moment. In the light of this she seemed to understand how he had come to his present condition.

When Margaret had worked so much out in her own mind, she had a conscience about suffering him in any way to help her to bear the weight of her own misery. But her resolve to deny herself the support of his strength was found to be less easily carried out by a mere exertion of will than some of her other resolves. If she was to see him at all she discovered that he must constantly lend her a part of himself unconsciously : it was not a question whether she could feel free to accept the beneficent sturdiness that walled her about from the poignant world that she dared not yet take a look at, and sustained her from day to day in her own sense of the Duty that remains, though Pleasure goes. It existed for her, as the sun exists : if she put herself in the way of its rays she could not be less than warm if she would.

When, at length, she took this scruple to Beatrice, she was openly scorned for it.

"But what a girl it is!" cried Beatrice. "Poke, poke, poke at a fire that even *your* conscience could n't prod into burning a fly; and let a regular conflagration—a Chicago fire—kindle under your very nose! Oh, Margaret!" she exclaimed with an indescribable accent of despair.

"Why, what in the world have I done?" asked Margaret.

"I don't know whether you *have* done it yet; but if you have n't it's his character rather than your carefulness that's to be thanked for it. You remember what I used to tell you before—before the other day. You would n't believe it then. You would n't tell him, or let *him* tell him of your engagement. But I've seen it going on this five weeks. A week ago it might n't have been plain to a girl whose modesty won't let her believe that she can matter to anybody. But even to her it must be plain now. Maggie! Surely you've seen!"

They were seated in the room above the parlour in Beatrice's little two-story house. Beatrice was running a long seam on a pinafore of green gingham for her baby, and, bent over the sewing machine, in this motherly occu-

pation, and delivering herself of these sagacities, the air of matronly wisdom seemed to have descended upon her.

When Margaret took her meaning, after a moment, the shame of it seemed as bad as the newspaper article—worse indeed, for of that she had only read a dozen lines, which it was possible to forget; but of this she tasted the entire ignominy. She did not know what to say. She wanted to fall on Deed's shoulder, and beg his protection from such thoughts. Why was he not here to shield her from them? But her next reflection was for Ernfield.

"Beatrice!" she cried. "I wonder at you!"

"I thought you would," she answered calmly. "But it is really time, dear, I made you wonder. I often try to fancy what such people as I can be made for, you know, Maggie. But I never wonder when I am with you. It's our business to cut a path for the feet of people like you, who are made to walk with their heads in the clouds."

"It's an insult to him!" breathed Margaret irrelevantly.

"Of course; and an indignity to you; and an open affront to Mr. Deed. Don't imagine I don't know that. But it's necessary to say it, all the same."

"How can you think such a thing of him?" cried Margaret

indignantly. She was scarlet. She put back the lock that habitually strayed into her eyes with a gesture of self-control, and went on with the crocheting on which she was engaged.

"Dear Maggie, he is only a man," returned Beatrice convincingly. "What makes you think him so different from other men?"

"Because he is, I think, for one reason," Margaret returned, studying attentively the baby sack she was making for Beatrice, for a lost stitch. "But if he were ever so like, it would not be cause to suppose him capable of such—— " She paused, inconclusively; and bent her eyes upon the work again. It had been a fortunate resource since she had been unable to fix her mind on reading, or any of her usual occupations. One could think, one could even be as miserable as one liked, or as one must, while one crocheted. "You seem to forget, Beatrice," she went on, quietly, after a moment, "that he is very ill –dying perhaps; and that I am,——" She did not know how to say what she was.

"Why, you dear, crazy, heavenly-minded, impractical thing!" cried Beatrice, trying not to laugh. "Since when did men love women less when they were ill? The people

who are most against woman—who won't have her on any terms—agree that she is a famous nurse! Oh, Maggie!" she exclaimed, at a look of deep pain on Margaret's face, "I don't mean that. I mean only that men are just as capable of falling in love with a woman on a death-bed as on horseback, or on a front piazza, in the bloom of health. What has that to do with it? And as to your other objection, it's just no objection at all. He can't know that you hold yourself no less bound to—to *him* because—because of things. He can't be expected to imagine that you are abhorring him and being loyal to him in a breath. Come! Be fair, Margaret! You must own that there is no reason why the man should n't have tumbled into love with you. The next thing is to rescue him."

"If you mean that I am to show him by my manner that I know him to have such a feeling; if you mean that I am to insult him, I'm sure you must know I could never do it. To think it would be bad enough; and I don't think it. To give an idea like that the sanction of a word, a silence, a look. . . . . Beatrice!" she cried, in a tone of injury which almost frightened her companion, who remained silent a moment.

Beatrice pondered the prospect from the bay window in which her sewing machine was set, and from which she could look over her geraniums, fuchsias, roses, lilies, Wandering Jew, and sweet alyssum, up and down the road, and far out to the mountains, flushed just now with the pink of sunset. The flowers ranked in pots on the shelf which followed the bow of the window, caught the gilding light on their greens and let a little filter through upon her head, as she sat before her unfinished seam, thinking.

"Margaret, dear, you know I can't like to wound you. I have to be so terribly frank to produce any impression on you: I don't wonder that it hurts you. But you must be hurt; it's a duty to hurt you—to sting you. What century do you suppose you are living in; in what country; in what state of society? I'm sure I never said or thought that it was nice to be such complicated people as we are, or as our ancestors have made us after spending nineteen or twenty centuries tying bow-knots in themselves. I've not the least doubt —goose—" (she gave her an affectionate smile) "that Corydon and Phyllis managed such things a deal better: they would have been stupid if they had n't, with nothing to do but mind the sheep. But we have travel-

led a frightful distance from such a state of things. Dr. Ernfield and you know sheep only as mutton and lamb: it's impossible that people who have arrived at that should treat each other as simply as if they were still wandering around with crooks under their arms."

"What makes you think I was born yesterday, Beatrice?" asked Margaret, fixing her eyes on her. "I know all that. I know it; but it does n't avail with me. There are other considerations—considerations infinitely above those; and which you are just as capable of understanding, if you would only let yourself."

"Maggie, look at me!" said Beatrice seriously. Margaret observed her obediently. "*I can understand what people say.* The fear of that is anything you like: I don't respect the fear of it; but I do respect the idea. The wisdom of the ages is in that phrase."

"You mean the folly," answered Margaret quietly. "You must know quite well, Beatrice, that I could never let the thought which people use in such matters weigh with me. If I should give up my individuality, my life, to conformity, and serve, with all the cowardice I could find the heart for, before the world's notions of things, I should only have lost the

realest thing I own, and gained not so much as my master's thanks. I learned that long ago. And one must prick one's fingers on one's own brambles about these things, anyway, I suppose. No one can be a guide for another."

"But, Maggie," urged Beatrice concretely, "the man's in love with you."

"So says Beatrice Vertner," returned her companion, gravely. "But if she should be mistaken—which she is—can she suffer for me the shame which I must feel if I did anything which presumed upon that idea? And who is there to bear his hurt for him?"

To which Beatrice, who, when she was serious was tremendously serious, answered, "And who, I should like to know, is going to restore to him his present feeling, from which you might turn him back, while there is still time; who is going to re-create for him the peace of mind you are encouraging him to lose for your sake, without the faintest chance of giving him anything in return; and what in the world can you say in common honesty when he accuses you, as he will, of having led him on?"

"Beatrice, dear," returned Margaret, patiently, "there are things which even you must not say." She went on with

her crocheting for a moment in silence; and the quiet, steady little push of her forefinger as it ran along the needle, and caught the stitch, seemed, for the moment, the embodiment of her sober view of life. "Don't you think it would be very unworthy for us to assume that a man like Dr. Ernfield could have anything less than the highest, the most delicate regard for a position like mine? Whatever you say, I believe he must have some guess about my feelings. If he has any such—such feeling as you say, he may be trusted, I think, to find wisdom of his own for it: I'm sure he does not expect me to control it for him. And if he did, or if I should wish it a thousand times over, pray how should I set about it?"

"But, Maggie dear, you could n't be reckless enough to let a man go on!"

"I suppose I must have heard that question discussed in twenty different cases," returned Margaret a little wearily, "and I could never believe that the remedies proposed could be felt by the man for whom they were to be employed as anything better than cruel and insulting. Letting a man go on, as you call it, is, at worst, postponing a question which you may never have to answer—which, in half

the cases to which women apply what they take for a considerate and unselfish kindness, would never be asked."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Beatrice. "Men are such stupids. You talk as if they were wise —like us. As if they would n't all get themselves into the most dreadful puddles, like a duck's chickens, who think they can swim, if we were n't by to look after them!"

"A woman is certainly bound not to allow a man to believe she cares for him when she does n't," owned Margaret; "but it's hard to see why she must keep a scouting party of foolish ideas about men's feelings in the field every moment of her girlhood. Surely the aggressive attitude that everybody sees in young girls, which implies that every man who comes near you is on the eve of proposing marriage, is not maidenly. I'm not sure, though it means so well, that it is not gross. For me to imagine such an intention in Dr. Ernfield (who, if there were no other reason, is too ill to think of marriage with any one,) would be simply unspeakable, Beatrice. You must see it. Come!" She left her work, and going over to her, stooped and kissed her cheek. "Come, Beatrice, you *must* see it!"

All this judiciousness could not keep a certain change out of her manner toward him, of course, when he came again. Beatrice, though she had retired from the contest defeated, had contrived to poison Margaret's thought of him with consciousness. But it was pleasant to see that he seemed to have no sense of the change.

Ernfield continued to come; and Margaret allowed herself without a prick of conscience to look forward more and more to the cheer he brought into the desolate days on which she had fallen. It was certainly true that Margaret always saw her own point of view so plainly and was so simply faithful to it, that she was in danger of reckoning too confidently upon the counterpart of her own feeling in another. It was at least a faith that anyone understanding it must have abused with reluctance; and in so far she was protected by her very rashness. But Beatrice was probably on unassailable ground in thinking it the reverse of worldly wise.

Yet, if Margaret had been bothered by two consciences about him, instead of feeling quite free with her one, her need for distraction from the gnawing of her thoughts must have been equally real and equally irresistible. She could not turn over in her mind the scene with Deed on that

morning quite every moment in the day. She must have gone mad if no diversion had offered from the circle in which she had come to argue about her conduct on her wedding day. Sometimes, in desperation, she would go into Maverick with Beatrice—the Vertners lived not quite in the town—and wait about while Beatrice did her marketing. She still hesitated before the thought of returning the calls which had been made upon her, in her capacity of stranger, during the month preceding her wedding day. When she said she did not care what people said she exaggerated as little as anyone who has made that hardy statement can ever have done; but she owned to herself that, just at first, she could not like to court the questions, and the polite and indirect, but not the less rasping comment that she must meet if she made these calls.

It was different with Dorothy, who had reached Maverick after that fatal day, and might be supposed not to be privy to her shame. Of course Margaret knew that she must know; but it was quite possible between them to sustain the convention that she did n't. Dorothy would sometimes come to the house, as they became better friends, and sit for an hour or more accepting Beatrice's advice about

arranging the house they had taken, while she was really listening to Margaret's silence. Sometimes she would find Margaret alone, and would make certain modest and doubtful advances. She liked her without being sure she understood her. They exchanged many confidences short of the real ones. They never spoke of Deed, of course.

Maurice had preached a trial sermon, and was staying on at Maverick in the hope of receiving a call to the pulpit of St. John's.

Ernfield did not cease to be a question between Beatrice and Margaret. But it was not until Margaret accepted an invitation from him to ride up Ute Pass with him, that Beatrice definitively washed her hands of her.

Ernfield and Margaret skirted the town, and directed their horses toward the gulch that opened beyond the railway round-house between the small, bare red hills that lay just without the limits of Maverick to the North. These hills, which rose from the plain abruptly, cut off the view of the great mountains behind them unless one climbed to their summits, when the horizon was seen to be populous with snow-peaks.

The town, after they had passed out of the narrow belt,

which was really "city," and which was densely populated by as many as five families to the acre, strayed lackadaisically along their road, until it reached the edge of the hills, where it paused at an Irishman's cabin so suddenly that after turning the first curve leading into the ravine, Ernfield and Margaret seemed to themselves as much alone as if Maverick were not engaged in rustling for the mighty dollar just around the bend.

The bridle path, followed by their ponies at a canter, turned with the windings of the ravine, at whose bottom a stream might once have run. The rocks, rising in vari-coloured masses to the high brown hills above their heads, would sometimes fall back, and leave a space a hundred yards wide or more, in which the grass grew rankly, but not greenly, in the manner of the herbage of the West. In the early morning it had seemed cold enough for snow; but that was no hindrance to weather which habitually takes the Indian Summer bit between its teeth just after breakfast every morning and makes a break for the sparkle, the keenness, the unfailing sunniness of the typical Colorado day. It was December; but in the sun at this hour it seemed like a day in June.

Half an hour after they had entered the ravine their horses stood upon a height. The path wound up to this point out of the gulch on its way to the Pass. Indeed this was the beginning of what was known as the Pass—a road between the hills, which if one followed it far enough and high enough would bring one to Colorado Springs. They were on the summit of the first considerable rise of the foot-hills toward the mountains; and their station commanded the beautiful valley, in the centre of which Maverick spread its shabby architecture, and sprawling design. Behind, at their feet, lay a small park, into which the hills dipped from all sides, and through the midst of which a thready brook ran. Margaret, who had seen nothing so vast as this bewildering prospect, running on all sides to the horizon, caught her breath at the expanse.

The sunshine, bathing the tops of the white peaks far on the thither side of the valley with an enchanting radiance, danced above the plain on which Maverick sat. The kindling air that breathed about them on their height seemed, as always in Colorado, to be drinking the sunshine and making it part of its substance, as one is sure the nobler wines must have done, in their grape days.

In this atmosphere everything was seen afresh, and Margaret found all her thoughts of the time since she had parted with Deed discovering themselves in new aspects, as she and Ernfield looked out on this great world—this world thrilled with its own silence. In the face of the boundless light and air and earth, and the limitless sweetness of the sunlight her world, too, seemed large and serene again.

"We talk of dying when we are sorry," she said to him. "Suppose we should be taken at our word, and remember too late that *this* is life. Whoa, pony!" She leaned over and patted the restive animal's neck. She circled the hills with her eyes as she looked up again. "I believe I am accustomed to think that all the hard things are the real life; and I've been sure of it lately." The tacit reference to her trouble escaped her unconsciously. "But when one sees things like this, one is not sure."

"I don't know," said Ernfield. "I should think one might be sure they are not. The other things are nearer —the miseries and pains and disappointments; and I suppose they keep tugging at every one's skirts, and crying that *they* are life. But it's an awful whopper, you may be

sure. If they are, the moon is our day, and the sun is the dead body."

He alighted to tighten the cinch of his saddle; the pony went through a series of obstructive manœuvres that gave pause to the conversation for a few moments.

"I wish I could be as confident," said Margaret when the animal was still. "But the things you speak of, Dr. Ernfield —don't you see that in one fashion or another they are so many ways of disabusing us of our cosy conceit that personal happiness is the main affair? And that, at least, we must be sure is not true. Can the wretchedness through which we learn that the world is not a contrivance for ministering to our self-love, but has other business in hand, such as crushing it, for example, be anything but very right?"

"Oh, I suppose not," returned Ernfield, smiling; "but how about the pink light on Ouray over there? Is n't that right too?" He shook his head. "I shall never believe, Miss Derwenter, that the sun in eclipse is the normal thing. I have an endless faith—since you speak of contrivances—that the sun was mainly invented for shining purposes; and I'm sure we were n't meant to grudge ourselves its shining."

"Perhaps!" murmured Margaret. "Perhaps!" Then,

after a moment, she added, "You have a cheerful view of life, Dr. Ernfield."

Ernfield laughed. "Rather necessary, don't you think? I've not enough left to waste in quibbles." It was the first time that he had referred to his condition.

"Don't say that," she begged. "You are going to get well. Since you talk of not grudging ourselves the sun's shining, you must n't grudge yourself that certainty. It has to be. Surely we have not all the responsibilities. And would it not be a shameful thing to believe that all your—your helpfulness and strength, Dr. Ernfield (I must speak plainly if I speak at all, you see), should be taken from the world while there are so many thousand drones and incapables left to go instead; and so many thousand tired bodies and minds left behind to weary for the help that you might give them. I can't believe that, Dr. Ernfield, any more than you can believe what —what you were just saying," she concluded, with a sense of having said too much; yet with a pleasure in having let him know her feeling.

"Why, what an abandoned moralist you are, Miss Derwenter!"

He caught his rein upon his arm, and made his pony stand

where he could tighten the cinch on her saddle, as he said "Who was it who was saying a moment ago that the teaching of life seemed to be that it did not exist for us? And here you would have me flatter myself with the old fiction that I—that any man—can count—that fate ought to clap its eye on me and save me forthwith to be a comfort to the world's declining years. The world will decline nicely, thank you, without me—are n't you sure of that?"

His head was down against the pony's side, as he gave the cinch the final twist. Pulling up a cinch takes the breath. But she fancied the long inspiration he drew, as he exclaimed "There!" and put the strap at the end of the cinch through the last ring, was more like a sigh.

"And besides," he went on, after a moment, "there's a thing or so to be said in favour of death. I wonder the poets don't try to say it more, instead of gasping before it in the craven rhymes that seem to please them so awfully. It's a pity, I grant you, that other people have to die; but I never could see why it should be so intolerable a thought to one's self. I mean, of course, if you have a certain thought about death," he added, gravely—"the Christian's thought, I suppose we should call it."

"But——" she began, and stopped impotently.

"Ah, yes," he owned, "I admit the 'but.' The slow ignominy of this stupid trouble of mine you were going to say—the creeping weakness. It's true. I should have chosen a great deal better if I'd arranged my own way of going: anyone who knows what a luxurious dog I am down at the bottom of my shirking heart would believe that of me, I hope. But I was n't asked." He glanced at her with a smile. "No, no!" exclaimed he, as she opened her lips to reply. "Don't try to deny it for me. It's very good of you; but it's no use, you know. I am a physician. I don't deceive myself. If I could only believe in your denial, you know, I should be glad enough to let you deny it for me by the hour. Or rather I should be glad to have you affirm the other thing for me. To affirm," he said dreamily; "it's the only thing in the least worth while." He paused a moment and Margaret wanted to say to him that he must not go on; but the processes of his thought always excited her vaguely.

His instinct for relating the common, daily movement of life to the confident morality which he seemed to keep with an engaging ease at the centre of all his thinking charmed

her: since her talk with Beatrice she had never enjoyed the certainty of innocence that this perceived and acknowledged charm had not had as much to do with her persistence in maintaining their relation on the same footing as her consideration for him. She felt guilty about it now, as she often did about anything which gave her happiness. In a way he substantiated her dreams for herself. She could arrive at the same ends by difficult and conscious means: she could keep her impulses, thoughts, feelings at a certain temperature by keeping them under glass; she could water and tend them and cut them back and get the blooms set down in the Botany, in the end. But things blossomed for him in the open, as if that were their natural atmosphere; and their flowering was not ruled—his plants, she was sure, knew no rules—but abundantly spontaneous, like the Nature of which they were part.

"When Agnosticism is the world's religion," he went on, "I suppose affirmation and denial will be alike indifferent, and alike uninteresting—as uninteresting as the world itself will be then. But just now it seems as if all the work that counted at all was being done by men with an awful lot of 'Yes' in them. And even when a fourth of it is pure

doubt, and the other three-fourths shout to keep that miserable fourth's spirits up, one has to believe, I think, that a brave three-quarter affirmative is better than all the whole negatives between Maverick and—well, and Lieutenant Greely's 'Farthest North.'" He laughed painfully.

Margaret hesitated a moment. Then she said, shyly, "Do you know, Dr. Ernfield, I believe that is what has worn *you* out—affirming for other people. Nervous prostration—it's a kind of physical Agnosticism, don't you think? It seems as if we did n't even believe in our own bodies any more."

"You are at least twice too acute for comfort, Miss Derwenter," he said, smiling. "My breakdown was n't due to anything so amiable. It was really because I had n't the temperance to stop there. The habit of absolute power is an irresistible one, I suppose. It made a despot of me, I know; and whatever my subjects might tell you of *their* awful case—for I assure you I showed no pity—it is an exhausting thing to be a despot."

"What nonsense!" She smiled.

"No, no," he disclaimed, "it's only right that my beastly

satisfaction with myself should be taken down a peg or two. I accept this as my punishment." Margaret's lips framed a sound; but he stopped her. "No, it's not gammon,—what I tell you. It's fact. I was outrageous about the whole business. I was young when I began, and I had a little success quite soon. It made me sure—infernally, intolerably sure. I led my patients a devil of a life. Don't think I'm inventing. That would be too shameful. Any of them would tell you as much—even those I have done something for: those more than the others, perhaps. Oh I was a brute, Miss Derwenter, whatever you think! But I've got my pay. It's wearing — being a brute." He smiled at her; but she saw that he was in deadly earnest.

"I don't know what you were, of course, Dr. Ernfield," she said simply, "though I don't believe you were anything like that. Only one thing is clear to me: you must live to be more of the same sort."

He bit his lip and turned his head that she might not see his face. "I assure you," he said, huskily, "you must stop wishing me so well, Miss Derwenter. I'm not worthy of it. If I were I should be able to bear it better."

The too ready tears started to Margaret's eyes. "What shall I wish for you, then?" she asked. "I will wish anything you like."

"Wish the impossible, please. That is the only thing that can do me the slightest good. Wish me the man I was six months ago: wish me the love of the only person who matters. Come, don't be close, Miss Derwenter! Wish the Never Will Be for me! I might get well on the mere hope of it!"

"Do you mean——?"

"Oh, mean——!" he cried. "I *don't* mean to be rude for one thing."

"No, no!" exclaimed Margaret, her face full of earnestness, "I only meant to say——" She had not an idea what she had meant to say.

"The kindest and sweetest thing you could invent. Great heaven, don't I know that! And don't I loathe myself for letting you even think it for me!"

He glanced suddenly at her face, and saw the tears in her eyes. He bit his lips; an inrush of emotion mastered him. The uncommon mood in which the expression of feelings habitually restrained had left him, was defenceless

before the impulse of love which sprang up in him at sight of the sweet tumult of compassion for him in her eyes. He was standing at her saddle pommel. Her arm hung by her side. He caught her hand to his lips in a long, blind, reckless kiss. Margaret gave him a swift, scared look as he relinquished it. Then, gathering her reins hastily, she turned the pony back down the road they had come up.

"Pride, ignorance, sufficiency, folly!" she said to herself with smarting eyes, thinking of her rejection of Beatrice's warning. Must she always be so grossly wise? She said to herself that Ernfield was not to blame, and shrank from the thought of him with terror, in a breath. It was her position—her intolerable no-position, that made such things possible.

As Ernfield followed her, she gave him a fleeting glance in which he read a reproach that cut him to the heart. He felt like spurring his horse over the edge of the precipice along which they were riding. But he decided to see her safely home, first. There were always precipices if one needed them.

He kept her in sight with difficulty. She pushed her horse down the steeps at a pace which made him fear for

her. A single thought was in her mind : Deed. Her heart went out to him in a passionate appeal for shelter and defence. The silent loyalty which she had kept for him, in the midst of all resentment of his act, had leaped to flame at the touch of Ernfield's lips ; and she could not think how she could live until she could stand at his side again where he could protect her from the world and from herself. Pride and bitterness fell away from her like the properties of a dream. Her eyes were wet with joyous tears.

Ernfield wondered at the radiant look of resolve upon her face as he helped her to alight at her own door. She did not care what he did for her now.

END OF VOL. I

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